

BLOOMSBURY COMPANIONS
TO GREEK AND ROMAN TRAGEDY



AESCHYLUS: SUPPLIANTS

Thalia Papadopoulou

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For
Dimitris and Maria Ftergiotis

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Preface

Aeschylus' *Suppliants* dramatizes the myth of the fifty daughters of Danaus, who flee Egypt and come to Argos as suppliants, trying to escape forced marriage to their Egyptian cousins. It was long considered to be the earliest surviving tragedy until new evidence in the mid-twentieth century established a later date. It is the least studied amongst the tragedies of Aeschylus and certainly one of the least read plays by any of the three great tragedians. The main appeal of the play to critics has long been almost exclusively textual, owing to the often corrupt status of the text. At the same time the dramatic value of the play has been regularly underestimated due to the long-established view that the play was archaic and primitive, hence unappealing when compared, for example, with the dramatically mature *Oresteia*.

Furthermore, the high proportion of lyric parts in the play, owing to the status of the chorus as the protagonist, seemed unattractive to the great majority of nineteenth-century scholars, whose tastes were rather used to the concentration of dramatic action on individuals. Another obstacle to the appreciation of the play by critics has probably been its very theme, the Danaids' opposition to marriage and their assertive determination to control their bodies and their lives as they wish. In pre-feminist times there was hardly any sensitivity towards the treatment of this theme, leading to biased readings which diagnosed the alleged misandry of the Danaids as pathological; these are rather enforced readings which reveal sexist approaches to the myth.

The present volume sets *Suppliants* in its literary, dramatic, social and historical contexts. It argues that the play, undeservedly disparaged in the past, should be appreciated in its own right as an intriguing and challenging drama, which poses fundamental questions, especially about female subjectivity, the polarity between Greek and barbarian, and ethnic identity. It reads the play as part of a thematic unity and examines its relation to other treatments of the Danaid myth. It also investigates the function of the Danaid myth from a broad anthropological perspective. It offers a thorough investigation of the dramatic concerns, by focusing on Aeschylus' engagement with central topics, such as supplication and the gods, gender and marriage, politics and ethnicity. The Aeschylean dramatization of the themes of exile, immigration and asylum-seeking makes the play all the more relevant to modern times. The study also explores the performance of the play on stage and its contribution to the making of

meaning, by investigating topics such as stage action, music, song and dance. It also gives a survey of the reception of the play from antiquity to modern times, with close readings of representative works.

The text follows the edition by [M.L. West \(1998²\) \(ed.\)](#), *Aeschyli tragoediae cum incerti poetae Prometheo* (Stuttgart: Teubner). All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

Aeschylus: Life and Works

Aeschylus was born at Eleusis in western Attica in c. 525 BC. His family was one of the old aristocratic families of Attica. He lived during the period that laid the foundations of Athenian democracy, from the end of the Peisistratid tyranny (510) and Cleisthenes' political reforms (508/7), leading to the radical democracy instituted by Ephialtes' legislation in 462/1, which curtailed the powers of the aristocratic council of the Areopagus. He also witnessed the formation of the Athenian grandeur and rise to power and took an active part as a warrior in the decisive victories of Athens over the Persians.

His career at the City Dionysia began in the Olympiad of 499-6, but his first victory came in 484 (with an unknown production). From the 470s onwards he was the most eminent tragedian of Athens, overall winning either thirteen¹ or twenty-eight² first prizes. The latter number may include posthumous victories, as some time before 425 the Athenians issued a decree which allowed a competitor to re-stage an Aeschylean production rather than produce his own plays.³ This decree was a special honour conferred posthumously on Aeschylus in recognition of his dramatic art. With an estimated total of about twenty productions in his lifetime, the number of thirteen victories is impressive and implies that, whereas he was not an instant success, he soon came to predominate the tragic stage; his long series of victories is known to have been interrupted by Sophocles on his very first entry in 468 (play unknown). Aeschylus was actively engaged in all the stages of the theatrical procedure, being a poet, an actor, a composer, a choreographer and probably also a costume designer.⁴

Aeschylus visited Sicily in the 470s, invited by Hieron of Syracuse to stage *Women of Aetna* on the occasion of the foundation of the city of Aetna in Sicily. It was on this trip or a later visit to Sicily that he restaged his *Persians*, first performed at Athens in 472. He died at Gela in Sicily in 456/5. His epitaph, written by himself, notably commemorated him not as a poet but as a warrior in the battle of Marathon. Five decades after Aeschylus' death, Aristophanes in his comedy *Frogs* (405) paid tribute to Aeschylus' art by dramatizing a contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in the Underworld. In this comedy, the gloomy period of the end of the Peloponnesian War, characterized by the relativism of the sophists, is associated with Euripidean dramaturgy, and contrasted with an older and more pious

era as reflected in Aeschylus' dramas. At the end of the play the Aristophanic Aeschylus wins and is escorted back to the upper world in order to offer political advice to his fellow-citizens.

Ancient sources attribute up to ninety plays to Aeschylus (Suda), while seventy-three titles are included in the catalogue preserved in several medieval manuscripts of the extant plays.⁵ Seven tragedies survive complete and several others have come down to us in fragmentary form. Although Aeschylus competed with tragedies on different myths, he seems to have favoured the development of certain episodes of a myth in a series of three tragedies (trilogy), and sometime to have treated a relevant story also in a fourth play, thus opting for a thematically unified tetralogy. A distinctive feature of a thematic trilogy and of its narrative continuity is that the plot is designed to build suspense progressively and thus to excite the interest and the attention of the audience gradually, making use of a climactic technique based on anticipation, casual sequence of events and interweaving of past and future events. Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is the trilogy which survives complete, while from his so-called Danaid, Theban and Promethean trilogies only one play has come down to us from each (*Suppliants*, *Seven against Thebes* and *Prometheus Bound* respectively, though the authenticity of the last is doubted⁶). Two other trilogies focused on the destruction by Dionysus of two of his opponents (Lycurgus and Pentheus), while others dramatized events from the Trojan cycle.⁷

Seven of Aeschylus' plays have survived, covering a period of only a few years of his career: *Persians* (472) on the historical event of Salamis dramatized from the perspective of the Persians; *Seven against Thebes* (467) on the Argive attack on Thebes and the fratricidal contest between Eteocles and Polyneices; *Suppliants* (probably 463) on Danaus and his daughters' request of asylum at Argos; the *Oresteia* trilogy (*Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*) (458) on Agamemnon's murder by his wife and Orestes' matricide and eventual acquittal; and *Prometheus Bound*, on Prometheus' punishment by Zeus.

According to Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449a17-18) Aeschylus diminished the role of the chorus and gave the dominant part to speech. This was facilitated by his introduction of the second actor (*Poetics* 1449a15-17), an innovation that gave greater dramatic variety to the plays. But a comparison with Sophocles and Euripides shows that in fact the Aeschylean choruses predominate. In his extant plays Aeschylus gives his choruses a major part, either by having them set the general atmosphere and outline the central themes of the plays or by portraying them as a distinctive and highly involved character, with a collective identity and a major impact on the development of the plot. The strong part played by Aeschylean choruses may be said

to be the natural result of the early theatrical conditions, before the introduction of a third actor (between 468 and 458), when a dramatist had to rely on the exchange between two actors.

Aeschylus often seems to be more interested in dramatic action than in individual character, hence his character delineation aims more at illuminating events than at exploring psychology. In this sense characters often tend to be the personifications of their role rather than individuals (e.g. Eteocles as leader of the city in *Seven against Thebes*). But the magnificent portrayal of Clytemestra in the *Oresteia* is unique, for the astonishing actions of this complex character require an elaborate treatment of her motivation, which both draws her in stark relief and contributes to the exploration of gender issues throughout the trilogy.

In terms of the religious universe of the plays, Aeschylus works within the model of divine justice but at the same time explores the complexity of causation and responsibility and emphasizes the mysterious nature of the forces that seem to shape history. In the development of the plot at the end of his trilogies (e.g. *Oresteia*, Danaid) he also shows a preference for restoration and settlement which introduce an optimistic prospect. Apart from the relation between humans and gods, human interaction within the civic context and the relations between individual and group become the focus of attention. Here Aeschylus' concern for the *polis* is evident in the political aspects of his dramas, with the portrayal of the conflict between individualistic aims and communal interest at times of crisis (e.g. in *Seven against Thebes*) or the treatment of democratic values and institutions (e.g. in *Eumenides*).

The Aeschylean style is lofty, and his grandiloquent vocabulary, rich in compounds, similes and metaphors, has strong resonances in epic and lyric poetry. Aeschylean drama is characterized by high diction, allusive and often repeated imagery as well as density in meaning. Apart from the elaboration of his verbal style, Aeschylus shows great concern for the visual aspect of the production by creating spectacles that are meant to astonish the spectators, especially in terms of tableaux (e.g. Clytemestra standing over the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra in *Agamemnon*), spectacular scenes (e.g. the raising of the dead Dareius in *Persians*), movement (e.g. the entry of the panic-stricken chorus in *Seven against Thebes*), costume (e.g. Xerxes in rags in *Persians*) and stage props (e.g. the carpet in *Agamemnon*).

The Danaid Trilogy

The date of the original production

For a long time *Suppliants* used to be considered the earliest extant Greek tragedy, produced in the 490s. This almost unanimous assumption was based primarily on the impression that the dramatic technique of the play was archaic and that the possibilities offered by the use of a second actor were not yet adequately developed, as the lyrics outnumbered the spoken parts. As the predominance of choral elements had been associated with early drama ever since Aristotle's discussion of the evolution of the tragic genre in *Poetics*, it was natural for modern critics to see this as an archaic element. This impression was enhanced by the fact that the choral presence is multiplied in the play, with the main chorus joined by two supplementary choruses, an unprecedented element in extant Greek drama.

These features led to the association of *Suppliants* with the early stages of Attic tragedy. A similar presupposition about the character of Aeschylean drama held that the supposedly archaic *Suppliants* was older than the other extant Aeschylean tragedies. However, as it is difficult to trace a linear progression in the development of the tragic genre, it is hard to pinpoint the stages in a poet's dramaturgy. This becomes more evident when one considers that in the case of Aeschylus only seven tragedies have survived and these represent only a short period of his dramatic career; hence any arguments about the development of his dramatic art need to be cautious.¹

The discovery of a papyrus fragment at Oxyrhynchus in 1951 and its publication the following year² brought the evidence that both drastically changed the widely held belief in an early date and proved the inherent risks of easily-made assumptions.³ This fragment⁴ preserved part of an ancient *didascalia* (dramatic record), where it was reported that Aeschylus was victorious with *Danaids* and *Amymone*, while Sophocles came second. Sophocles' very first entry in dramatic competition dates back to 468,⁵ while Aeschylus is known to have won first prize with his Theban trilogy the following year. Therefore *Suppliants* must have been produced some time between 467 (the date of *Seven against Thebes*) and 458 (the date of the *Oresteia*). The possibility that in the first line of the fragment the word 'arch-' could be restored as the name 'Arch < edemides >' (according to Lobel in his

edition of the fragment⁶), namely, the name of the eponymous archon of 464/3, suggests that March 463 is the most likely date of production within this period.⁷

Despite the external evidence provided by the didascalical notice, several scholars have still insisted on an early date for the trilogy,⁸ arguing that the *didascalia* refers either to a posthumous staging or to Aeschylus' own production that took place a considerable time after the composition of his plays.⁹ However, in the case of a posthumous production the play would probably not have been written many years before the poet's death. In the case of a reproduction as an honorary tribute to the poet, it is more probable that the revised, instead of the original old work, would be the one to have survived, while the producer's name should probably have been recorded in the case of reproduction. It would also be difficult to explain why this play, if it was considered archaic, was chosen for revival, and, even more, won the victory.¹⁰ On the other hand, the assumption that the poet composed his work early, put it aside and produced it at a later time, is a notion which recalls modern theatrical practice more than that of the fifth century, when a poet used to write for a single performance at a certain festival; moreover, the lapse of time would again involve revision of the old play, with the result that the revised play would have been regarded as completed at the later date.

Underlying these scholarly attempts to argue for an early date despite the publication of the papyrus is the impression that the play is archaic in terms of diction, technique, structure and style. A different strand of research has tried to isolate elements which might convey allusions to contemporary events and has led to various conclusions.¹¹ Thus the presentation in the play of a democratically-ruled and friendly Argos has been regarded as a reflection of the friendly relation between Athens and Argos in the fifth century (see [Chapter 6](#)). Although tracing the direct reflection of historical events in a literary work is a debatable practice in itself,¹² it should be pointed out that the friendly relation between Athens and Argos spans several periods in the fifth century, hence a historicist approach may result in suggesting a number of likely dates for the production of the trilogy.¹³

Finally, pictorial representations corroborate the evidence of the didascalical notice and suggest a date in the 460s. The earliest depiction of Danaus' landing at Argos, which seems to imply the impact of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, is found on two Attic *hydriai* (water vessels), which both date from 460-50 BC (see [Chapter 8](#)). Other supporting iconographic evidence comes from the portrayal of the myth of the Danaid Amyclone, the theme of the accompanying satyr-play: it first appears on Attic vases around 460 BC, where she is shown to be

attacked by satyrs or pursued by Poseidon, and it may have been inspired by the production of Aeschylus' *Amymone*.¹⁴ (see [Chapter 8](#)).

Structure¹⁵

The fragment from the *didascalia* preserves the titles *Danaids* for the third tragedy and *Amymone* for the fourth play (satyr-drama). The other two tragedies¹⁶ which formed the tetralogy are *Suppliants*, whose plot is based on the Danaid myth, and *Egyptians*, from which only the title is preserved in the catalogue of Aeschylean dramas. The title *Thalamopoioi* ('Those who prepare the bridal chamber') has sometimes been considered as an alternative title to *Egyptians*, although it is more likely that this play was a satyr-drama.¹⁷

In *Suppliants*, the only surviving tragedy of the Danaid trilogy, the 50 daughters of Danaus, accompanied by their father, flee their home in Egypt, determined to escape enforced marriage with their cousins, the 50 sons of Aegyptus, and arrive at Argos, where their ancestress Io came from. Fearing pursuit from their suitors, they sit as suppliants in a sanctuary near the city of Argos. They plead their case before king Pelasgus and request help both as Greeks in origin and as suppliant refugees, but they also threaten to commit suicide within the sacred space if their appeal is not granted. Pelasgus faces an excruciating dilemma: either reject the suppliants and offend Zeus as well as risk ritual pollution for the city, or accept them and risk war with their Egyptian suitors. He reluctantly agrees to help the suppliants but is not willing to proceed without consulting his people and getting their approval. Danaus reports that the king has in fact persuaded the Argive assembly to protect the suppliants. When the Egyptian fleet is sighted, Danaus leaves to bring Argive help, and the Danaids, left alone, face the Egyptian invaders, who attempt to drag them to the ships by force. Pelasgus intervenes in time to repulse them and takes the Danaids into the protection of the city. Danaus instructs his daughters to adhere to modesty and they agree to resist the attractions of desire and avoid marriage, but a dissenting voice from the men of Argos counter-argues that marriage is the destiny of women. The play ends with the procession into the city in a foreboding atmosphere of impending war with Egypt.

Since almost nothing but the title remains of *Egyptians*, the issue of the order between this play and *Suppliants* has given rise to controversy. *Egyptians* has been considered either as the first play, in which case it was set in Egypt and treated the pursuit of the Danaids by their cousins down to the Danaids' flight from Egypt,¹⁸ or as the second,¹⁹ in which case it dramatized the coming of the Egyptians to

Argos. The latter argument is corroborated by the fact that the plot of *Suppliants* anticipates a violent clash between the Argives and the Egyptians. The view that *Egyptians* was the first play of the trilogy was popular in the nineteenth century. It was primarily based on the assumption that this play treated the strife between Danaus and Aegyptus and revealed an oracle, attested in later sources,²⁰ that had been given to Danaus, foretelling that he would be killed by one of his sons-in-law. On this view, the knowledge of this oracle must have been the motive behind the Danaids' flight from Egypt along with their father. But this does not seem plausible, as such an arrangement would have reserved the concentration of dramatic action to the final play alone (see [Chapter 5](#)).²¹ The view that *Egyptians* is the second play has found more supporters among scholars, though, admittedly, the very fact that its plot is lost necessarily leaves the issue inconclusive.²²

If *Suppliants* is indeed the first play of the trilogy, then between the action of this play and that of *Egyptians* there would have been a battle between the Egyptians and the Argives, in which Pelasgus probably fell. The continuation of the war might have been prevented by negotiations leading to a treacherous marriage: Argos might have been besieged and the main part of *Egyptians* would have focused on the negotiations between Danaus, now king²³ of Argos, and Aegyptus' sons, leading to marriage between the cousins. Danaus' plan to have his daughters kill their grooms may have been communicated to the audience or Aeschylus may have relied on the audience's familiarity with the legend and may have disclosed the murder at the beginning of *Danaids*.

Although almost nothing of *Egyptians* survives, two fragments from *Danaids*, the third tragedy, may have something to say about the plot. This play most probably opened with the disclosure of the murders on the day after the murderous bridal night and ended with the Danaids' acceptance of the idea of marriage through Aphrodite's intervention. Given that Hypermetra has an integral part in the Danaid myth, she may have taken part in the dramatic action.

Fr 1 (*TrGF* fr. 43): 'And then the radiant light of the sun will come, and I will graciously awake the newly-weds, enchanting them with songs in the company of boys and girls.'

This fragment²⁴ outlines a practice according to which waking-songs were sung by friends of the bride and groom to married couples in the morning after their wedding. If the speaker is Danaus, then he describes the situation in the morning following the bridal night, before the discovery of the murders. Alternatively, he may utter these words while defending himself, as we know from the scholium

(ancient comment) on Euripides' *Orestes* 872 that he was put on trial for participating in his daughters' murders of their husbands.²⁵ There is dramatic tension and sinister irony as the waking song is sung at a time when the husbands, all except Lynceus, are dead.²⁶ The lines could also be spoken by a servant, if not by Danaus. On the other hand, the ceremonial song mentioned in the fragment could be referring to the Danaids' second marriage or more generally to future marriage festivals.²⁷ In this case, it could belong to the end of the play and be uttered by a divinity (Aphrodite or Hera).

Fr 2 (*TrGF* fr. 44): Aphrodite: 'The sacred Heaven yearns to penetrate Earth, and Earth herself is yearning for the wedding too; desire makes showers of love fall down from Heaven, impregnate Earth; then she gives birth to food for flocks and to Demeter's gifts for all mankind. The moisture of this marriage makes the trees grow perfect fruits. Of all these things I am the cause.'

These verses²⁸ were spoken by Aphrodite according to Athenaeus (*Banquet of the Sophists* 13.600b). Here Eros is described by Aphrodite as a cosmic force which is beneficial to mankind. The words spoken by a powerful goddess certainly carried an authority that influenced future events. The wider context may be the defence of Hypermetra, in which case Aphrodite may at this point be defending her against her prosecutor.²⁹ This would be a situation similar to the trial scene dramatized in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (566ff.), though, admittedly, Aeschylus may have found it difficult to stage a trial with two actors, in which case the assembly may have been held offstage,³⁰ in the same way as the Argive assembly of *Suppliants* is reported (605-24), and not acted on stage. If Aphrodite defended Hypermetra, then the opposing party may have been another divinity³¹ instead of a human (e.g. Danaus or the Danaids), in which case Artemis would be a likely candidate,³² if one considers that at the end of *Suppliants* Artemis and Aphrodite are juxtaposed in the words of the Danaid chorus and of the subsidiary chorus (1030-42). The idea that a trial may have taken place in *Danaids* owes much to the account in Pausanias (2.19.6) that Danaus prosecuted Hypermetra at an Argive court, which acquitted her, and she dedicated a statue to Aphrodite in gratitude. On the other hand, a trial brought by Danaus against Hypermetra may have resulted in the condemnation of Danaus and his daughters by the Argives,³³ or the play may have featured a trial of Danaus and his 49 daughters, brought about by Lynceus in all probability, where Aphrodite would have been the prosecutor.³⁴

In the case of a trial, the jury probably consisted of Argive citizens, if one thinks that in *Suppliants* the king consults with his people

(368-9, 398-9).³⁵ Alternatively, if a trial (of either Hypermestra or Danaus and his other daughters) was not part of the Aeschylean treatment but a later version, Hypermestra may have been threatened by her sisters after sparing her husband, and may have appealed to Aphrodite for help, in which case the play may have ended with an epiphany of the goddess which saves Hypermestra and pronounces the power of Eros and the proper institution of marriage (by consent). Overall, Aphrodite could have had a reconciliatory role (parallel to Athena's similar one with the Furies at the end of the *Oresteia*) and the Danaids may have accepted a type of marriage which differed from that with their cousins.³⁶

The Danaids' punishment in Hades, that is, their endless water-carrying task, may be alluded to in *Suppliants* 230 and 415-16,³⁷ and may have been part of the end of the trilogy, though two factors seem to argue against this possibility: first, this version seems to be a post-Aeschylean addition to the story, and secondly, it does not fit into a context of final conversion to the idea of marriage and reconciliation. These difficulties are removed, however, if one accepts Keuls' plausible suggestion that the water-carrying task was a purification rite through hardship, and punishment in Hades was not envisaged (see [Chapter 3](#)). The need for purification³⁸ of the murderous Danaids at the end of the trilogy may be foreshadowed³⁹ in the choral entry song (*parodos*) of *Suppliants*, where the maidens say that they were not condemned for murder by the vote of a city (6-7), and may have formed the prerequisite for the prospect of a second marriage. They must have been purified as Orestes too needs to be purified after his crime (*Eumenides* 283). Aeschylus may well have introduced the purification through the water-carrying ordeal, where he may have dramatized their transformation from murderesses to the beneficiary water-nymphs of tradition (see [Chapter 3](#))⁴⁰ or he may have closed the trilogy with the announcement of a second marriage for them. Although a combination of both these elements at the end cannot be excluded,⁴¹ it is more plausible to say that the water-carrying ordeal would be the means of purification leading to a second marriage and that the benevolent character of the Danaids as water-nymphs in myth was not introduced, in the sense of a transformation, but only evoked for the audience, who saw resolution at the end of the trilogy.

Finally, it has been argued⁴² that the resolution in the end was through the founding of the religious festival of Thesmophoria, celebrated all over the Greek world and associated with the status of married women.⁴³ This attractive suggestion would accord with Herodotus' (2.171) association of the Danaids with Thesmophoria (see [Chapter 3](#)). The festival was celebrated in honour of Demeter, the goddess of fertility and the mother of Persephone, whose abduction by

Hades was a paradigm for marriage.⁴⁴ The marriage to Hades is alluded to in *Suppliants* 791, where the Danaids prefer Hades to their cousins. Demeter may also be said to be evoked through the references to fertility in *Suppliants* (674-5, 688-93) while she is also mentioned by Aphrodite in *Danaids* (*TrGF* fr. 44). Further, Aeschylus may have connected the Danaids with fertility (cf. 1026-33) according to their standard associations in Argive legend (see [Chapter 3](#)).⁴⁵ In this sense, he may have relied on their aspects as water-nymphs and mystic figures and brought their story to a happy resolution.

The accompanying play of the trilogy was the satyr-play entitled *Amymone*.⁴⁶ The surviving fragments are few and their contents do not help to reconstruct the play, but the story of Amymone is known from ancient mythographers' accounts and other sources.⁴⁷ Poseidon's anger against Inachus caused the springs of Argos to run dry. Here is the motif of the Argive drought, which may have originated in real circumstances, leading to the association of the Danaids with the springs and the invention of irrigation (see [Chapter 3](#)). Danaus sent his daughter Amymone to fetch water. On her way, a satyr attempted to rape her and Amymone cried for help. Poseidon scared the satyrs off by throwing his trident and then seduced her into a union from which Nauplius was later born. From the rock that the trident hit a spring was produced, putting an end to the drought and enabling Argos to be fertile again.

The outline of the story makes it clear that it was closely related to the trilogy not only because its main character, Amymone, was one of Danaus' daughters, but also because its sequence mirrors that of the Danaid myth: sexual union by force gives way to sexual union by consent, ultimately leading to the birth of offspring and the foundation of an eminent line of descendants. Apart from the general theme, points of detail too imply a parallel between the trilogy and the satyr-drama. The near subhuman nature of the Egyptian suitors, as described by the Danaids in *Suppliants* (e.g. 895), finds a strong parallel in the bestial nature of the satyr in *Amymone*. Even the outcome of the proper union between Amymone and Poseidon, namely, the re-fertilization of Argos, recalls Aphrodite's speech about the fertilizing effects of Eros in the fragment preserved from *Danaids*. Amymone's watering of dry Argos recalls the version recorded in Hesiod about the beneficiary role of the Danaids in teaching the Argives how to dig wells (see [Chapter 3](#)). It is not certain whether Aeschylus knew or invented the story, but in either case the appropriateness of the theme for the play that closed the tetralogy is obvious. Amymone's story bears close resemblances to another satyr-play, Aeschylus' *Dictyulci*: ('Net-drawers').⁴⁸ In that play too, a woman is threatened, rescued and finally married to her rescuer, while it is

also thematically related to its accompanying trilogy, where Polydectes in the play of the same title attempts to force Perseus' mother to marry him.⁴⁹ Hence with *Anyman* too Aeschylus seems to dramatize in the satyric genre a myth which parodically illuminates the thematic concerns of his tragic trilogy.

The Danaid Myth

The myth and its interpretations

Danaus was traditionally credited with a number of inventions,¹ such as the alphabet and the *pentêkontoros* (a ship with 50 oars),² and his daughters were considered to have brought the festival of Thesmophoria from Egypt and to have taught the rites of fertility, both associated with Demeter (Herodotus 2.171). But the most familiar aspect associated with Danaus and his daughters was the story of the murder of the sons of Aegyptus and the ensuing fate of the Danaids. Several details of the story about the Danaids occur in various, often contradictory, accounts both before and after Aeschylus. The fullest version is given by a mythological handbook entitled *Library* and attributed to Apollodorus (2.1.5-23).³ The common elements in all versions outline the basic story-line as follows: there is a quarrel between two brothers, Danaus and Aegyptus, who trace their origin back to the Argive Io, fathers of 50 daughters and 50 sons respectively. A marriage between their offspring is enforced, but the Danaids, at their father's instigation, murder their husbands on their wedding night. Only Hypermetra spares the life of her husband Lynceus.⁴ A trial of either Hypermetra or her murderous sisters is often added to the story.⁵ The sequel in Greek accounts usually involves the Danaids' purification and re-marriage, while the story of their punishment in Hades becomes a common motif especially in Roman times.

The myth of Danaus and his daughters was an integral part of the Argive tradition. Danaus traced his origin back to Zeus and his offspring founded the distinguished line of descendants which led to the birth of Heracles ([Aeschylus], *Prometheus Bound* 871-3; Pausanias 10.10.5), the Dorian as well as the panhellenic hero *par excellence*. The importance of Danaus for Argos was such that Pindar referred to Argos as 'the city of Danaus' (*Nemean* 10.1). Similarly in Euripides' *Orestes* (876) Argos is referred to as the city of Danaus' descendants. In a wider context, the name of Danaus came to be connected not merely with the Argive people but with the entire Greek race, as becomes evident in Homer, where the Greeks are commonly called 'Danaans'. Given these associations of Danaus, it seems strange that he is said to have come from Egypt. The tension between Danaus' Greek and

foreign identity is implied in the versions where he is an aggressor who invades Argos and seizes the kingship from the Argive king (Apollodorus 2.1.13; Pausanias 2.16.1; 2.19.3-4; 7.21.13). In this respect, it is telling that Isocrates (10.68 and 12.80) refers to Danaus' occupation of Argos as an example of barbarians taking control of Greek lands.

A plausible explanation is that the Argives believed that the first inhabitants of their territory were Pelasgians, hence the founder of the Danaan race was conceived as arriving from another place.⁶ In Euripides' *Orestes* (692) Menelaus calls Argos 'Pelasgian' and in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (107) the Argive army is called 'Pelasgian'. On the other hand, Euripides' *Archelaus*,⁷ a play which stresses the importance of the Argive lineage of its protagonist, opens with a prologue in which Archelaus traces his lineage back to Danaus, who, after coming from Egypt to Argos, founded the city of Inachus (father of Io) and established a custom all over Greece, namely, that the people who had been called Pelasgians should henceforth be called Danaans (*TrGF* fr. 228). The name Pelasgus is attested⁸ as that of an Argive who belongs to the remote mythical past of Io.⁹ It may be the case that Aeschylus used the name Pelasgus for the king of Argos, in order to recall the name of the autochthonous Pelasgus and of the Pelasgian people. He then dramatized the transition of kingship from Pelasgus to Danaus and the consequent foundation of the Danaan line, which starts from the offspring of the union between Hypermetra and Lynceus.

On the other hand, the scholium on Euripides' *Hecuba* 886 may convey an earlier version of Danaus' origin, according to which Danaus never went to Egypt but was always king of Argos. Here Danaus and Aegyptus are descendants of Io living in Argos until the jealous Danaus exiles his brother and his brother's sons (the Aegyptiads) to Egypt. In this respect, the association of Danaus with Egypt, which is standard in all other accounts, seems to be the result of his relation with Io and the latter's wanderings, which eventually brought her to this country. In fact, since in other versions Danaus is the king of Egypt (or Libya),¹⁰ his Greekness can be stressed through his association with Io, the Greek priestess loved by Zeus and forced to leave Argos and reach Egypt. Because of his Greek origin, Danaus' migration to Argos is a return to his homeland and his journey follows the reversed route of that of Io, namely, from Egypt back to Argos. The association of Io and her descendants with Egypt probably took place in the seventh century BC and was related to the identification of Io with the Egyptian Isis, a horned deity.¹¹ On this view, the creation of genealogies which provide mythical ancestors in foreign countries, but ultimately trace their origin back to Greece, may be an

ethnocentric form of appropriation, using myths to appropriate foreign lands and to justify Greek colonies around the Mediterranean.¹²

The Danaid myth has given rise to several interpretations. One of the older explanations was that it referred to natural phenomena.¹³ This line of allegorical interpretation¹⁴ argued that the Danaids were the Nymphs of the Argive springs, while their suitors represented the streams, which, depending on the season, became torrents or dried up. The tradition that the Danaids cut off the suitors' heads (Pausanias 2.24.2) was taken as an allusion to the stemming of the water-flow at the fountains in as much as the Greek word for head (*kephalê*) also implied the meaning 'spring' or 'headwater', though it is doubtful whether this sense was widespread in antiquity.¹⁵ The main arguments for this interpretation were (a) the number of the Danaids, which recalled the 50 Nereids and (b) the association of the Danaid family with water, both in the tradition that Danaus alone (Hesiod's *Ehoiae*¹⁶ fr. 128 M-W) or his daughters (a Hesiodic verse quoted by Eustathius on *Iliad* 4.171) taught the Argives the art of irrigation through the digging of wells and in the Danaids' discovery of springs in the Argolid (Strabo 8.371).

On the other hand, the number 50¹⁷ for offspring was quite common in myth to indicate large families (e.g. Priam was also said to have 50 sons),¹⁸ while the art of digging wells may have been a helpful solution for an arid Argolid and suitably described as an invention of either Danaus or his daughters. This view is perhaps right in arguing against an essentially allegorical interpretation of the myth. However, it misses an important feature of mythological figures, namely, their various associations or personae. In other words, the Danaids' association with water and their overall benevolent contribution to Argos may not underlie the myth of the murder of their husbands, yet it remains an important aspect of them in the repository of myth, from which a poet could choose in order to give his own treatment, and should not be played down. Poets relied, indeed, on the inherent variety of myth and on their audience's familiarity with a range of different stories, so it is important to be aware of as many of the Danaids' associations as possible.

The explanation of the Danaid myth as allegory for natural phenomena was popular in the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, another type of approach gained ground as attention shifted to an 'historical' approach, which considered myths as a guise under which events or institutions of specific historical eras could be discerned. In this context, Bachofen,¹⁹ whose sociological work argued that an older matriarchal world was reversed and superseded by a patriarchal

system of male domination and female subjection, saw in the myth a reflection of a transitional stage in between the two eras. On this view, the Danaids' refusal to marry by force reflects the choice women allegedly had with regard to marriage in an earlier period, while the Danaids' punishment for murder reflects the patriarchal notion of female subjection to men. Bachofen was obviously wrong in saying that in all versions of the myth of the Danaids' murders the maidens' right was acknowledged,²⁰ but his view is certainly valid in drawing attention to the conflict between the sexes. Nevertheless, the role of Danaus as their instigator should caution against an easily-made 'feminist' reading of the Danaids (see [Chapter 5](#)).

A strictly historical, as opposed to sociological, approach²¹ traced the origin of the myth in the commercial exchanges between Argos and Egypt in remote times. The tension between the Danaids and the Egyptians, resulting in the latter's violent deaths, was explained as a mythical recasting of the capture of women by men (perhaps pirates) and the eventual murder of the captors in historical time.²² The problem with this kind of approach to myth, however, is that it is based on speculation about the historical past.

By contrast, a different type of approach²³ shifted the focus of investigation from the 'historical' interpretation of myth to comparative mythology.²⁴ Employing this comparative scope, for example, Bonner²⁵ argued that the story of the Danaids' crime is similar to an ancient folktale preserved in a number of versions in European traditions, from Caucasus to Iceland. The wide diffusion of the pattern argued against the possibility of transmission from one people to another, hence Bonner did not try to trace the pattern back to a common origin but attributed it to the parallel workings of the mythopoetic instinct in several peoples. Despite the variations in different versions, the basic story-line goes as follows.²⁶ A band of brothers lose their way and find refuge in a place where they are given accommodation by a father or a mother and his/her daughters, whose number always equals that of the brothers. The features of the women are usually savage. Each of the women sleeps with one of the brothers at night. The father or the mother (often represented as a witch) instigates the murder of the hosts by decapitation. The youngest brother suspects that the women plan some treachery against their hosts and eventually manages to save his brothers by means of a trick. The main difference between that folktale and the Danaid myth is that in the latter all but one of the brothers are murdered. In the Danaid myth it is Hypermestra who spares her husband, whereas in the folktales the youngest brother saves the other men. But the Icelandic version, according to which one of the maidens rescues the brothers by warning them of the danger, is closer to the Greek version

of Hypermestra's role in the story.

Greek myth knew of monstrous women whose fierceness or lasciviousness posed a threat to men:²⁷ Pausanias (9.27.6) relates how Heracles was threatened by the 50 daughters of Themistius, while the story about the Thracian king Diomedes, who forced strangers to satisfy the sexual desires of his daughters and then murdered them, is used by Eustathius (on *Iliad* 10.531) to explain the proverb '*Diomêdeios anankê*' ('Diomedean constraint or torture'). These monstrous women bear resemblances to the Danaids and they both recall the folktale. The Lemnian crime was another notorious instance which is quite similar to the Danaid deed,²⁸ as it resulted in collective murders of men, with one exception that was spared. According to this myth,²⁹ the women of the island of Lemnos were punished by Aphrodite for neglecting her worship by being afflicted with an intolerable smell that made them repugnant to men. When their husbands brought concubines from Thrace, the Lemnian women out of jealousy took revenge by killing all male inhabitants, except for one, Thoas, whose life was spared by his daughter Hypsipyle. This crime is in fact used by Aeschylus in *Libation Bearers* as a mythic example to demonstrate the disastrous results of excessive female passion (594ff.) and is described as the worst of crimes (631).

The underworld punishment

The part of the myth that received most treatments in both literature and art and came to be the best-known association of the Danaids was their endless punishment. This was inflicted upon them as a means of expiation for their crime and consisted in perpetually drawing water in a leaky vessel in the Underworld. The water element is common in the innocent persona of the Danaids as water-nymphs and in the water-carrying nature of the Underworld punishment of their criminal persona, a punishment not only for their murders but also for their rejection of marriage.³⁰ The motif of drawing water occurs in several folktales.³¹ In particular, the motif of constantly drawing water appears in two versions of the folktale discussed above: in one version the woman who rescued the brothers is punished by being forced to pour water constantly from one well to another, and in another the youngest brother tricks the witch into bringing water from the river in a sieve in order to gain time.³²

The motif of the Danaids' 'futile water-carrying' is first attested in literature in the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus* 371e (c. first century BC), where the Danaids are mentioned together with other sinners in Hades, such as Tityos and Tantalus, whose punishment had

been well-known ever since Homer (*Odyssey* 11.576-92). On the other hand, in Plato's *Gorgias* (493a-b) a leaky jar is an image for the desiring part of the mind in stupid or uninitiated people, while in *Republic* (363d) it is used of the impious. Plato here seems to be echoing an idea from the mysteries, according to which the uninitiated would be condemned to a task similar to that of Sisyphus.

It is not certain whether the task of filling a perforated vessel was first attributed to the uninitiated or to the Danaids. The fact that the earliest reference associates the task with the uninitiated may be accidental.³³ An interesting scholarly view³⁴ attempted to connect the uninitiated and the Danaids by arguing that they both fail to complete a sacred ceremony. In the case of marriage, which was to be regarded as a sacred rite, it was held that the ancient custom of placing a *loutrophoros* (a water-vessel for a bath)³⁵ upon the graves of unmarried people was probably associated with a superstition that they were condemned to carry water (for the bridal bath) perpetually in the Underworld. This appealing view was later refuted by the fact that the vessels represented in art were not *loutrophoroi*.³⁶ An alternative would be that the task may have been attributed to the Danaids as a random punishment, i.e. with no particular association with their crime, just as Sisyphus and the other evil-doers had been presented as being punished in Hades ever since Homer, and simply as a way to expiate the crime and thus end the Danaid story with a moral.³⁷ Perhaps too the proverb 'to pour water into the pierced *pithos* (jar)' originally referred to the futility of an endless task in general and was later attributed to the Danaids or the uninitiated.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is probable that the traditional persona of the Danaids as water-nymphs may have facilitated their association with water-carrying as punishment for their crime.

The wall-painting of Hades by Polygnotus at Delphi, described by Pausanias (10.28-31), is an interesting source about the function of water-carrying in Hades. Polygnotus was a famous painter of the fifth century BC, who drew from both Homeric and non-Homeric sources as well as adding elements of his own.³⁹ The painting included the notorious transgressors Sisyphus, Tantalus and Tityos, while two women were portrayed as carrying water in perforated vessels and were called in an inscription 'the uninitiated women' (Pausanias 10.31.9). Pausanias also described four other figures, both male and female, as carrying water to a pot (10.31.11) and said that in his view these were people who had not been initiated to the Eleusinian rites. The figures in the painting are generally labelled as the 'uninitiated', but it has been tentatively suggested⁴⁰ that Polygnotus may have been the first artist to include the Danaids in the Underworld.

The same task came to be associated particularly with the Danaids

in the Roman tradition, starting from references in Horace, Tibullus and Propertius, in the first century BC.⁴¹ Also in the first century BC, the image of ‘pouring, like those virgins in the story, water into a sieve, always unfilled’ was used allegorically by Lucretius (*On the Nature of Things* 3.1006-7, cf. 3.935-7) to indicate the notion of insatiable desire as an endless torture for those who do not fully enjoy life.⁴² A Roman fresco dated to the late first century BC and depicting *Odyssey* landscapes in a building on the Esquiline, now in the Vatican Museum,⁴³ deserves special mention. This gives a similar presentation of the Underworld in the *Odyssey*, but, by contrast with Polygnotus’ painting, the women here are given the name-tag ‘Danaids’, which implies that in the first century BC the identification of such figures with the Danaids was common.

Although the above evidence implies that the motif of the Danaids as water-carriers postdates Aeschylus, it is probable that the Aeschylean trilogy may have influenced this standard image of the Danaids, in which case what Aeschylus arguably portrayed as an ordeal of purification later came to be associated with their punishment.⁴⁴ From the mid-fourth century BC in South Italy⁴⁵ the Danaids’ endless task is often portrayed in illustrations where the place is marked as Hades by the clear presence of figures such as Hades and Persephone. The frequent appearance of the Danaids as water-carriers in South Italiote vase-paintings may indicate an interest in Aeschylus’ Danaid trilogy,⁴⁶ if it treated the Danaids’ water-carrying task as a symbolic redemption.⁴⁷ The fact that the water-carriers on the Italiote vase-paintings look happy reminds us that the water-carrying ordeal was not only a symbol of punishment in Orphic-symbolism but also a purifying ordeal as part of an initiation rite, hence invested with mystic connotations.⁴⁸ Since the funerary monuments from fourth-century South Italy reveal in general a profound influence from Greek tragedy, it is probable that in the case of the water-carrying motif the origin may have been in the appearance of a *pithos*-ordeal in a tragedy, with the last play of the Danaid trilogy (*Danaids*) being the most likely candidate (see [Chapter 2](#)).⁴⁹ On this view, the purification of the Danaids may have formed part of the lost plot of the third play, where Aeschylus may have introduced the purification of the Danaids by means of the ordeal of the leaking *pithos*.⁵⁰

Apulian vase paintings representing themes from Aeschylus’ Danaid trilogy portray a *hydria*,⁵¹ and this evidence corroborates the view that the *pithos*-rite may have been part of Aeschylus’ *Danaids* (see [Chapter 2](#)).⁵² Here the attribution of the specific task might not be coincidental. Water is both the necessary element involved in cleansing and associated with the benevolent persona of the Danaids

in myth, where they are connected with the springs of Argos. The overall positive picture of Argos in *Suppliants* might have been intensified by Aeschylus' dramatization of a change of the Danaids from murderesses to revered figures as the Argive tradition would have had them.⁵³ Such a transition is similar to the transformation of the Furies into gracious goddesses (Eumenides) at the end of the *Oresteia*. Aeschylus, then, may have represented a similar conversion of the Danaids into benevolent figures in accordance with their positive persona as water-nymphs in myth. Alternatively, the Danaids' purification through the water-carrying ordeal may have formed the prerequisite for the prospect of their second marriage as part of the happy resolution of the trilogy (see [Chapter 2](#)).

The myth before Aeschylus⁵⁴

Homer does not mention the Danaids. On the other hand, some of the post-Homeric epics of the so-called Greek epic cycle,⁵⁵ about Argive legends, may have treated aspects of the Danaid myth. The anonymous *Phoronis* knows of Io, as Callithoê, who is mentioned as the priestess of Hera, is probably the double of Io (*EGF* fr. 3), but it is not known whether it treated Io's journey to Egypt and its consequences. The story leading to the Danaids' murder of their bridegrooms was treated in another anonymous epic, entitled *Danaïs* (or *Danaids*), of unknown date but certainly earlier than Aeschylus. In one fragment (*EGF* fr. 1) the Danaids are said to have 'armed themselves' in Egypt. This seems to refer to the Danaids' participation in the war between Danaus and Aegyptus. The fragment is quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Miscellanies* 4.120.4) as an example of female valorous acts, and implies the martial or masculine nature of the Danaids. If *Suppliants* is the first play of Aeschylus' trilogy (see [Chapter 2](#)), then Aeschylus clearly diverges from the epic, as the war between Danaus and his brother is not mentioned in the play. On the other hand, a couple of passages from *Suppliants* (83-5, 741-2) have been taken as indications that this war preceded the action of the play, in which case *Egyptians* would be the first play of the trilogy. But this kind of reference to myth does not necessarily establish the order between plays; for example,⁵⁶ the references to the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* do not imply that *Agamemnon* was preceded by an Iphigenia-drama. The portrayal of the Danaids in the epic *Danaïs* rather suggests that in myth it was their Amazon-like nature that was predominant; this also features in a fragment from a dithyramb by Melanippides of Melos (*PMGF* fr. 757), where the Danaids do not resemble women but roam in chariots and engage in hunting.

Aegimius, an epic attributed to Hesiod, deals with the myth of Io, but Euboea rather than Egypt seems to be Io's final destination (fr. 296 M-W),⁵⁷ and it is not known whether any mention was made of the Danaids. The Danaid myth may have been treated, either in full narrative or in passing, in Hesiod's *Ehoiae*. Here we learn about Io, a priestess of Hera, but her metamorphosis is attributed to Zeus and not to Hera as in Aeschylus (fr. 124 M-W). In the account of the descendants of Io and Zeus references are made to the 50 sons of Aegyptus, who came to Argos without their father (fr. 127 M-W), to Danaus' or the Danaids' discovery of springs in the Argolid (fr. 128 M-W) and to Hypermestra and her offspring (fr. 129 and 135 M-W), following a confrontation between Danaus and Lynceus (cf. fr. 129.2 M-W).⁵⁸ In the *Shield* (327), part of the Hesiodic corpus but generally regarded as spurious, Lynceus is mentioned as the ancestor of Heracles. The genealogical line that leads from Zeus and Io, via the Danaids and Lynceus, down to Heracles, may have been established already in the progeny of Io in the *Ehoiae* and here its evocation is explained by the fact that the *Shield* focuses on Heracles.

Special reference should be made to the early prose mythographers, starting from Acusilaus and his *Genealogies* in the sixth century. Not many fragments survive from this work, but it is known that he treated Argive legends, including the story about Io (fr. 26-7 Fowler), and his work was most probably available to Aeschylus, as was Hecataeus' *Genealogies*, which treated the genealogy of Danaus (fr. 19-22 Fowler).⁵⁹

To return to poetry, apart from epic, lyric poetry too treated several aspects of the myth, starting from Archilochus in the seventh century. Archilochus (*IEG* fr. 305) is mentioned by the Byzantine historian Ioannes Malalas as having treated the story that Lynceus started a war against Danaus, killed him, became king and married Hypermestra. If the testimony is correct, then Archilochus' version may be relevant to the clash between Danaus and Lynceus in Hesiod's *Ehoiae* (fr. 129.2 M-W).

Pindar, Aeschylus' contemporary, mentions the torment of Io (*Hymns* fr. 51f (b) 13). In *Pythian* 9 (474 BC) Danaus sets a footrace to determine which of the suitors should marry his 48 daughters (111-16);⁶⁰ here the number implies knowledge of the different fate of Hypermestra and Amymone. In this version of a second marriage, which predates Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy, it is difficult to imagine that the Danaids will remarry without a prior purification. Both the purification of the Danaids at the command of Zeus (Apollodorus 2.1.22) and their remarriage (starting from Pindar)⁶¹ were later part of the tradition of the Danaids. It may be that the version of purification and second marriage instead of endless punishment in the

Underworld (or indeed their and their father's murder by Lynceus, who spared only Hypermestra, as the scholium on Euripides' *Hecuba* 886 reports) is the product of the Argive tradition, which wished to establish a noble lineage for the Argives, tracing the noble families back to Danaus and his daughters without any stain of pollution; this refined version of the Danaid myth seems an appropriate choice for Pindar and Pausanias' similar version may well have derived from Argive sources.⁶²

The different fate of Amymone implied in Pindar is recorded also by the mythographer Pherecydes (fr. 4 Fowler), who mentions her union with Poseidon. Pherecydes was active in the mid-fifth century, hence his version may postdate the Aeschylean play. The union of Amymone and the god later appears in Lucian (*Dialogues of the Sea-Gods* 5.3), where Poseidon tells her that she will escape the Danaids' endless punishment. It may have been the case that the original version of the Amymone story had nothing to do with the Danaid myth and that Amymone was later introduced into the Danaid genealogy.⁶³

In Bacchylides 19.15-45 the Io-myth is close to that described in *Suppliants*. This is a dithyramb dated not later than about 460⁶⁴ in which case it is not clear whether the drama or the dithyramb was produced first. In the eleventh epinician ode, of unknown date,⁶⁵ Bacchylides relates the story of the madness and healing of the daughters of Proetus. Proetus was the son of Abas, hence grandson of Lynceus and Hypermestra. The name Abas was mentioned already in Hesiod's *Ehoiae* (fr. 129 M-W). In lines 74-5 the race of Danaus and Lynceus is mentioned, hence Bacchylides was aware of this genealogy (see also 11.40 and 69). An antecedent event related in the mythical narrative by Bacchylides is the story of the strife between the brothers Acrisius and Proetus over the kingdom, which recalls the dispute between their ancestors, Danaus and Aegyptus (11.64-6).⁶⁶

The Danaid myth was dramatized by Phrynichus, who wrote tragedies entitled *Egyptians* and *Danaids* (*TrGF* frs. 1 and 4).⁶⁷ It is not known whether they were part of the same trilogy or whether they were produced before or after Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy. Since the titles parallel the plays in the Aeschylean trilogy, one is left to wonder whether Aeschylus chose to give his version of a theme treated by Phrynichus in the same way as the ancient hypothesis (preface) to *Persians* informs us that he adapted Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women* (both on Salamis). Therefore, it is unfortunate that only one fragment survives. Here we learn that in Phrynichus' *Egyptians* both Aegyptus and his sons went to Argos. This differs from Hesiod's *Ehoiae*, where Aegyptus did not accompany his sons, while in Hecataeus too (fr. 19 Fowler) Aegyptus was not present.

To conclude: Although the Danaid myth was well attested before Aeschylus, the paucity of evidence and the fact that only one play from his Danaid trilogy survives, make it difficult to establish the changes introduced by the playwright. It is possible that Aeschylus' version of Danaus asking for asylum instead of invading Argos is an innovation⁶⁸ which gives prominence to the theme of supplication. Pelasgus too, as the name of the Argive king, seems to be an Aeschylean invention, aiming at portraying the foundation of the Danaan race at Argos in place of the old Pelasgian race. In *Suppliants* the motive behind the flight of the Danaids is not the dispute between their father and uncle. In a similar manner, although Danaus seems to have a central role both before and after Aeschylus, it also seems that Aeschylus reduced his part and gave the predominant role to his daughters,⁶⁹ thus moving the focus to the Danaids' own motivation.

Aeschylus makes use of the different personae of the Danaids which were available in the diverse tradition. In suggesting from the very beginning of *Suppliants* that they are prone to using violence (as when they threaten to kill themselves) and in raising questions about their ultimate motives in rejecting marriage at all costs, he brings into his treatment of the central theme of the trilogy, namely, their murders, their Amazon-like persona, with the masculine and aggressive characteristics they sometimes had in myth. The Danaids' savage aspect in other Greek literary treatments as well as the resemblance of the Danaid myth to the folktale's pattern of cruel women imply that the Aeschylean portrayal of the Danaids, which focuses on the idea of the persecuted maidens as the starting-point for the dramatization of the myth, aims at raising from the very beginning the question of justice in a way which invites the audience to sympathize with the Danaids. This may be said to facilitate the resolution at the end of the trilogy, where Aeschylus evokes for the audience the Danaids' benevolent associations in myth where their persona was a blessing for the Argives. The various personae of the Danaids in myth, which span from sources of blessings to perpetrators of crime, make them suitable protagonists in dramatic treatment and allow Aeschylus to shape a myth, which shares several elements with a folktale, in his own distinctive manner.

Religion

Supplication

Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is the first extant tragedy to focus on the ritual act of supplication, which also features prominently in *Eumenides*, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Euripides' *Suppliants* and *Children of Heracles*.¹ Supplication of a human or a god directly or through contact with a sacred place was an important religious and social institution in antiquity, which defined human behaviour within a divine framework.² The weak position of the suppliant who is persecuted, the threatening presence of the persecutor and the crucial part played by the recipient of supplication constitute elements suitable for dramatic treatment. In the case of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, supplication is employed effectively as a strong dramatic device, guiding the audience's reception of the Danaids throughout the trilogy. The portrayal of a group of maidens who are persecuted by violent suitors, flee their country and arrive at Argos, where they are at the mercy of their hosts, is meant to arouse sympathy for their plight as victims.

The Danaids' arrival at Argos as suppliants seems to be an Aeschylean innovation, which aims at stressing the helpless state in which they find themselves at the opening of the trilogy. The derivation of the word *hiketês* ('suppliant') from the verb *hikô* ('come', 'arrive')³ is alluded to at 20-2, where the chorus refer to their arrival at Argos carrying suppliant branches in their hands. Already in the opening line the chorus invoke Zeus, the protector of suppliants, using the epithet *aphiktôr* ('protector'), an Aeschylean coinage which combines the meanings 'to arrive' and 'suppliant' to imply the role of Zeus as patron of suppliants, otherwise attested with the cult-title *Hikesios* ('of the suppliants') (347).⁴ They state that they are not guilty of bloodshed (6-7, 196), hence they are at pains to make clear that their arrival and supplication carry no threat of pollution for the city. This is the first reference to the notion of pollution, an important theme in the play.⁵ The sanctuary with the statues of the gods whom they supplicate, as well as the suppliant boughs they carry (20-2), function throughout the drama as a vivid reminder of the ritual act of supplication and of the religious background (354-5).

Danaus advises his daughters on the proper behaviour they should

exhibit in order to gain compassion and avoid offending the person supplicated (191-203). The overall modest and submissive behaviour they are instructed to show is in accord with the behaviour expected of suppliants in antiquity, as they are in a helpless position asking for protection from their hosts.⁶ Both exile and supplication are here (cf. 348-50) combined as they both outline the state of the Danaids' helplessness before Pelasgus. Danaus also instructs his daughters to call upon the gods at the altar and ask for their protection (211-28). Both their reverence towards the Greek gods and their supplication in a Greek manner (241-3) serve to stress the priority of their Greek over their Egyptian status and to bring them to closer relation with both the gods and the land they supplicate. This respect for the Greek gods will later be starkly juxtaposed with the Egyptian herald's offensive attitude towards the gods of Argos (893-4, 921-2).

From the beginning of the drama (8-10), the Danaids explain that they have fled from Egypt in order to avoid what they consider to be an unholy and abominable marriage to their cousins. When interrogated by Pelasgus, they notably evade answering explicitly regarding the legal issue of their decision (335-9, cf. 387-91). Their refusal to give a definite answer and their insistence on asking for help cast a shadow over the cause of their supplication. When Pelasgus realizes that helping the suppliants may bring war to his country (342), the Danaids argue that justice is on their side (343, cf. 384, 395, 429-31) and stress the force of the ritual act of supplication (345). They ask Pelasgus to show respect to the altar that is wreathed with garlands (345), and the word they use for respect (*aidou*) evokes the expected reaction of a person supplicated, namely, inhibition which prevents the rejection of supplication.⁷ Upon looking at the sanctuary shaded by the suppliant boughs, Pelasgus shudders with fear of the wrath of Zeus *Hikesios* (346-7) enhancing the visual impact of the scenery (cf. 354-5) and revealing a strong belief in the divine punishment of any human violation of supplication.⁸ The divinely-sanctioned obligation that binds one to respect suppliants along with the wrath of Zeus 'of the suppliants' are used by the chorus as a pressing argument in their attempt to persuade Pelasgus (361-4, 385-6, 402-6).

As Pelasgus continues to falter, the chorus use an emotional appeal to the king, when they invite him to envisage their future suffering if he does not offer them protection (418-31). The same threat⁹ of suicide was expressed by the Danaids in the *parodos* and addressed to the gods in case they did not offer their help (154-61). Their latent manipulative use of the threat of suicide as a way of extracting divine help carried an outrageous tone there. A similar use of the same threat to extract human help occurs at the climax of the exchange with

Pelasgus, when they threaten to hang themselves from the statues (463-5).¹⁰ It is this threat which coerces Pelasgus to help them in order to avoid enormous pollution (472-3) and the wrath of Zeus *Hikesios* (478-9). Pelasgus' favourable response closes this phase of the Danaids' supplication, and the king invites them to leave their suppliant boughs, as a sign of their predicament, and to move from the sacred altar into the grove. This implies that the supplication directed towards Pelasgus personally is over but that it is now addressed to the gods and to the Argives.¹¹ This change agrees with Pelasgus' shift of emphasis concerning the responsibility for the decision from himself to the citizen-body (365-9), as the Danaids had sat at a public altar and not at the king's hearth. Pelasgus also instructs Danaus to carry suppliant-boughs to other altars in the city (482-9), arguing that the weak position of the suppliant is likely to arouse sympathy from the citizens. Fear of the wrath of Zeus, the protector of suppliants, as well as the incurable pollution which will threaten the city, are the main arguments used by Pelasgus to convince the Argives to vote in favour of the suppliants (616-24). The result implies that the civic authority of the democratic state eventually protects religion,¹² as the Danaid cause has been presented from the very beginning as religious through supplication. The city's favourable decree marks the end of the Danaids' supplication,¹³ although when they are threatened by the Egyptians in the fourth episode (825ff.), the sanctuary is the place where they seek protection from the gods.

Overall, the stress on the suppliant status of the Danaids helps portray the maidens as helpless victims of persecution. However, Aeschylus leaves open the question whether the reason behind their supplication is justified and makes their evasion of the issue raise questions about their cause. Further, the state of helplessness and submission which is generally expected of suppliants is reversed by the fact that the Danaids are portrayed as manipulative in their attempt to persuade Pelasgus and do not hesitate to use coercion in order to secure his help. Although the means of 'psychological blackmail' they eventually make use of may be said to function as their climactic argument to highlight their despair, the threat of massive suicide,¹⁴ with its consequent incurable pollution for Argos, suggests that they threaten to turn from victims to enemies of the very city they now regard as their potential saviour. It is significant that although both they and Danaus stress that they represent no threat of pollution to the city, as they are not suppliants guilty of bloodshed, they now express their determination to bring an extremely dangerous pollution to the city. The Danaids' later reference to the pure altars as a divine gift for the Argives (652-5) will carry an ironic touch when

contrasted with their earlier determination to defile the sacred space of Argos with their threatened suicide.

The fear of pollution, which plays the most decisive part in making Pelasgus succumb to the demands of the Danaids, recalls another such that troubled Argos in the past. As Pelasgus narrates (260-70), this pollution was caused by an old bloodshed which brought men-killing monsters to Argos and was cured only by the intervention of Apis, who gave his name to the land (117, 129).¹⁵ This creates a parallel which makes the threatening Danaids resemble the old predicament that befell Argos. The Danaids' potentially inimical role towards Argos is thus raised in *Suppliants* and foreshadows its development in the course of the trilogy, as the killing of the grooms is an act that brings pollution.¹⁶ The purification which probably took place in *Danaids* may be said to restore ritual purity both for the Danaids and for Argos.¹⁷

The Danaids' manipulation of Pelasgus involves a reversal in the state in which the maidens and the kings find themselves: although fear, despair and helplessness continuously characterize the suppliants from the beginning of the drama, the dilemma they make Pelasgus face amounts to an impasse which reduces him too to a state of fear and despair (379-80, 470-1). Pelasgus' dilemma, the earliest decision-scene in extant Greek tragedy,¹⁸ is thus revealed as the manipulative victory of the Danaids. In presenting the Danaids both as helpless victims and as fearless manipulators, Aeschylus invites his audience to perceive the complexity of his chorus, who in the remainder of the trilogy become the killers of their grooms, probably at the instigation of their father.¹⁹ The use of the suppliant persona associated with manipulation and ultimately resulting in harm (for Aegyptus' sons and for the city of Argos) first appears in this trilogy. It is a pattern which occurs in later Greek tragedy as well, notably in Euripides' *Medea* and *Hecuba*, where Medea and Hecuba respectively opt for the persona of the powerless suppliant in order to exact violent revenge on their enemies.²⁰

The gods

Along with supplication, prayer to the gods²¹ has an important part in the action, as the Danaids rely not only on the city of Argos but especially on the gods for assistance. Their invocations at 209ff. serve to accentuate their Egyptian background, since the gods they select have their counterparts in Egyptian religion, with the sole exception of Poseidon, who is significantly invoked through a reference to his attribute, namely, the trident (218). The sanctuary with the altar

shared by all gods (222) is indicative of the variety of divine assistance sought by the Danaids. Above all gods, it is Zeus,²² in a variety of cultic titles, whom they invoke. Not only is he the protector of suppliants (1, 347, 385, 479, 616), the champion of justice and the punisher of evil (86-103, 347, 385, 404, 427, 437), the mightiest of gods (526, 595-9, 815), and the protector of the rights of hospitality (627, 672), but he is also the ancestor of the maidens through his union with Io (15-17, 41-7, 139, 162-75, 291-323, 527, 531-94, 811, 1062-7). Therefore, for the Danaids, Zeus is a god close to them both as their original progenitor and because they claim that justice, sanctioned by Zeus, is on their side (343, 359-60, 381-91, 395, 402-6, 437, 528, 813-14). Although they believe in Zeus' favour, they acknowledge that he is in general difficult for humans to understand, as his mind remains impenetrable to mortals. These thoughts are developed in their hymn to Zeus (86-111), acknowledging human limits regarding the nature of the divine. But when the same admission is made at the end of the drama (1048-9, 1057-8), it is expressed by the chorus of the Argive guards, in a context in which they draw the Danaids' attention to the possibility that they too may marry in the future. The unknowability of Zeus' will there invites the audience to think about the Danaids' perspective on Zeus throughout the play and to wonder where Zeus may stand with regard to the central theme of marriage in the course of the trilogy.

Aeschylus' overall treatment of the Danaids' perspective on Zeus suggests that the maidens tend to adopt a one-sided view of what, in essence, seems to be a contradictory divine role.²³ Every time they call on Zeus to protect them from the pursuit of their cousins they envisage him as the healer (576-9, 1062-7) of Io through his gentle restoration of Io to human form. The relationship between Zeus and Io is presented in the play as a wide-spread story and known to Pelasgus (293, 310). As Io left Argos and wandered until she reached Egypt (292, 311), so her descendants have followed the reverse direction (538), leaving Egypt and reaching Argos, seeking to find an end to their tribulations and laying their hopes in Zeus' intervention. The relation of their own present plight to the old sufferings of Io is so strong in their perception that they attribute it to Hera's jealousy, as if Hera's vindictiveness has spanned the generations to persecute Io's descendants (162-6).²⁴ The parallel reaches a climax at 350-3, where they identify themselves with their ancestress who was transformed into a cow, using a simile that likens them to a heifer.

The irony in their approach to the story of Io and Zeus is that they suppress the fact that Io's tribulations originally started because of Zeus' lust for her.²⁵ In this sense, Zeus was the male who sexually pursued a female, which implies that, if Io parallels the Danaids, then

Zeus parallels Aegyptus' sons, hence the Danaids' appeal to Zeus for help seems paradoxical.²⁶ This paradox may be felt at 590-1, where the Danaids, immediately after narrating at length the story of Io, wonder which god other than Zeus would be more appropriate for them to call upon. When they refer to their pursuit by their cousins, the Danaids describe their lust as a delusion of their minds, in terms of their evil intentions and frenzied purpose which are notably likened to a goad (*kentron*) (105-11), a word which recalls the gadfly (*oistros*) that tormented Io throughout her wanderings (308, 541, 556-7, 563). The word *oistros* is used in Greek tragedy to denote frenzy, usually erotic; in Io's case, where the use is both literal and metaphorical, she tries to escape the stinging of the gadfly and the sexual advances of Zeus in the same way as the Danaids now flee the sexual union with their cousins.²⁷

What is also mentioned by the chorus in the story of Io, but constantly suppressed in terms of the parallelism with the Danaids' case, is that the cure that Zeus provided for Io was the sexual union that resulted in the birth of Epaphus (170-1, 314-15, 580-1). Epaphus was named after Zeus' gentle touch upon Io (313-15), and it is this gentle caress (535, 1066) and divine breath (577) that the Danaids have in mind when they refer to the release of Io's torments. The relationship between Zeus and Io resulted in sexual union that led to childbirth, whereas the Danaids are opposed throughout the drama to such a prospect for themselves. In this respect, although the Danaids assume that they resemble their ancestress, it is only Hypermestra in the end who can be said to provide a parallel to Io, as she is the one who opts for marriage and motherhood.²⁸ The Danaids' stress on Zeus as the gentle begetter of Epaphus and their belief that Zeus uses no violence (99) imply that they suppress Zeus' role as a lustful pursuer of females.²⁹ This view may in turn suggest that when they oppose marriage and pray to keep their virginity, they do not entirely reject the institution of marriage but only the particular union with their violent suitors (see [Chapter 5](#)). So the marriage between Hypermestra and Lynceus may represent the kind of harmonious union modelled upon the union between Io and Zeus. If Zeus 'of the suppliants' predominates in the opening play of the trilogy, then in the course of the trilogy, when the Danaids murder their grooms, they not only pollute themselves and the city but also offend Zeus the patron of hospitality (*Xenios*), whom they invoked in *Suppliants* (627, 672), as the Egyptian grooms are both foreigners and guests at Argos when they are murdered.³⁰ It is plausible that, given the important part of Zeus in the first play, especially as a patron of the suppliants, he had an important part as the patron of hospitality in *Egyptians*³¹ and perhaps also as presiding over the purification at the end of the

trilogy, especially since in tradition he was regarded as the god who ordered the purification of the Danaids.³²

Apart from Zeus, another deity who has an important place in the Danaids' invocations is Artemis. Owing to her protection of virginity, the maidens pray to her in order to avoid sexual union (144-50, 1030-3), associated with Aphrodite (1032). However, in the second *stasimon* (ode in between episodes) (625-709), where the chorus pray to the gods to send blessings to the Argives,³³ they invoke Artemis, who is also associated with childbirth,³⁴ to oversee the birth of Argive children (674-7). This may imply either that they acknowledge the importance of marriage and procreation but refuse it for themselves or that their only objection is to the particular marriage with their cousins.³⁵ The strongest rejection of the prospect of procreation is suggested at 788-91, where their wish to commit suicide, which is here no longer manipulative but expresses their despair, employs the 'bride-to-death' motif, namely, they imply that they would rather marry Hades than their husbands.³⁶ The use of this motif here may be a latent allusion to the religious festival of Thesmophoria (see [Chapters 2 and 3](#)) and the marriage between Persephone and Hades, which involved abduction, hence violence, and acceptance or reconciliation. Artemis both protects virginity and oversees the transition of young maidens to the status of motherhood. The importance of procreation becomes apparent both from the myth of Io and her offspring and in the Danaid myth, which becomes paradigmatic of it, since, contrary to her sisters who murdered their husbands and refused the prospect of childbirth, Hypermetra gave birth to a son and secured the continuation of the Argive line. In this respect, the Danaids' stress on Artemis' association with virginity and the rejection of Aphrodite's sphere of sexual consummation reveal a one-sided view of human life, such as will be dramatically explored by Euripides in his *Hippolytus* in 428 BC.³⁷

Danaus describes Aphrodite's presence as exerting her power over both animals and humans (999-1005), but instructs his daughters to resist this power and cling to chastity. By contrast, the chorus of the Argive guards in the *exodos* (exit scene) sing of Aphrodite in a respectful manner, stressing the revered status she enjoys among gods (1034-42). Aphrodite is here mentioned together with Zeus and Hera (1035). This divine triad also appears in *Eumenides* (214-15) as patrons of marriage,³⁸ and the reference in *Suppliants* may reflect an actual Argive cult in which Aphrodite was worshipped as a goddess of marriage together with Zeus and Hera.³⁹ Be that as it may, in *Suppliants* it is predominantly an image of reconciliation. Throughout the play Zeus and Hera are imagined as being at odds due to Hera's jealousy over her husband's pursuit of Io. Both as a protector of

marriage and as responsible for their ancestress's plight, Hera is not a favourable divinity for the Danaids, but she is also one of the local gods with an important cult at Argos (291-2). Here, then, the Argives refer to Hera not only as the spouse of Zeus in myth but also as *their* goddess,⁴⁰ who is in addition traditionally associated with marriage.

Aphrodite was also associated with marriage by the Danaids (1032) and is here described by the Argives in a notably gentle manner as she is accompanied by Desire, Persuasion and Harmony. Desire and Persuasion were traditionally linked with Aphrodite, while Harmony was the daughter of Aphrodite and Ares (Hesiod, *Theogony* 937).⁴¹ Aphrodite's associates suggest a gentle kind of relationship, which implies consent and is contrasted with the violent pursuit of the Danaids' cousins.⁴² Consent and mutual love also characterize the union between Heaven and Earth in Aphrodite's speech in *Danaids* (*TrGF* fr. 44) (see [Chapter 2](#)).⁴³ Persuasion, in particular, was important not only in terms of sexual seduction but also with regard to marriage, and, according to Plutarch (*Moralia* 264b), she together with Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite and Artemis was one of the divinities of marriage.⁴⁴ It was also Aphrodite's traditional role to persuade the bride and to bring her to the bridegroom.⁴⁵ Aphrodite's divine appearance in *Danaids* (*TrGF* fr. 44), with her description of the 'marriage' between Heaven and Earth as the cause behind all growth in nature, is both anthropomorphic and cosmic.⁴⁶ Here Aphrodite is a force that governs the universe⁴⁷ and oversees fertility in plants, animals and humans. This idea recalls the references to fertility in *Suppliants*, which unite with the notion of human procreation and imply the role of Demeter, who may have played an important part in the trilogy through the festival of Thesmophoria, when married women practised abstinence temporarily away from their husbands, while their return home was meant to promote fertility.⁴⁸ In fact, Demeter has a complementary role to those of Artemis and Aphrodite. If Artemis is usually associated with extreme chastity and Aphrodite with erotic excess, as the Danaids perceive them in *Suppliants*, Demeter stands for domesticated sexuality and fecundity, hence she is the divinity who may be said to oversee the status of married women.⁴⁹

Finally, the Danaids associate Aphrodite with another god they view in negative terms, namely, Ares, the god of war, when they pray that Ares, the sexual partner of Aphrodite, may never destroy the youth of the Argive land (663-6). Although Ares is disliked, since peace is generally preferred to war (630-8, 678-83), for the Danaids Ares is also associated with sexual union. When he is called Aphrodite's bedfellow at 665, this recalls his earlier description by the chorus at 635 as *makhlos* ('lewd', 'wanton'), a word which implies lack

of control in both war and love.⁵⁰ The association of Ares with both war and sexual union brings to the fore an irony regarding the Danaids' attitude. Although they pray that war may never come to Argos, it is their own unyielding wish to avoid sexual union that results in the Argives' facing war with the Egyptians, and thus the Danaids unwittingly assimilate the destructive aspect of Ares.

Gender

Since Greek tragedies were composed by men, performed by men and addressed to predominantly (or exclusively) male spectators, the dramatization of gender themes draws special attention to the definition of gender roles and the construction of masculine and feminine identities. Several plays, notably Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and Euripides' *Andromache*, to mention just three, focus on marriage to explore the relationship between men and women. Aeschylus' *Suppliants* focuses on the Danaids' hostility to marriage with their cousins and uses it as a means to explore the Danaids' feminine subjectivity and its relation to masculine identity. The Danaids' fleeing the marriage with their cousins is the dramatic motive that sets the Danaid trilogy in motion. The exact motivation that leads to their aversion to marriage is a much debated scholarly issue.

To begin with, the question is whether the Danaids object to marriage generally¹ or to marriage with their cousins specifically. Aversion to marriage in general is a common motif in Greek myth and rite, referring to the virgins' resistance to marital subjugation (cf. 392-3) as the initial stage in the initiation of young maidens into the adult life of married women.² On this view,³ the play focuses, albeit in an exaggerated form, on the theme of adolescent femininity, as the Danaids represent in an extreme way the attitude of the virginal bride, whose hostility to marriage is often portrayed in imagery⁴ of terrified flight⁵ and pursuit, the attack of a tender animal by a predator⁶ and the violation of an untouched meadow, where sexual union is envisaged as rape, enslavement and defilement of the purity of the virginal body.⁷ More broadly, a maiden's fear of both marriage and childbirth is in fact a common motif not only in ancient Greece but also in Near Eastern texts dating back to at least the second millennium BC. These texts reveal the recognition of the extremely harsh transition from maidenhood to adulthood, represented in the themes of the cow-maiden and her release or of the boat loaded with cargo (standing for the woman and her baby) which is endangered by the storm at sea.⁸

The Danaids call on Artemis as the virginal goddess who is both pure (1030) and untamed (144-50). They liken themselves to a heifer pursued by a wolf (350-1). They refer to their 'flowers' of grief (73),

recalling Io, who gathered flowers in a meadow (43, 539). Then there is the supplication performed by the Danaids, which recalls an established connection between the suppliant and the virginal bride, as they are both inviolable.⁹ Supplication can be seen as analogous to marriage, since brides are incorporated into married life as suppliants are incorporated into community, and in *Suppliants* supplication is portrayed as a preliminary stage to that of marriage in the rest of the trilogy.¹⁰ Once offered asylum at Argos, the Danaids become not full citizens but ‘resident aliens’ (*metoikoi*, ‘metics’, 609; see [Chapter 6](#)) and their new status in the city recalls the view of the married woman as a *metoikos* at her husband’s hearth; according to a well-known saying by Pythagoras, a husband should bring his wife into his home from the hearth, like a suppliant.¹¹

However, although Pelasgus and the Argives behaved properly towards the suppliants, the violent behaviour of the Egyptian suitors, exemplified in the insolent arrogance of the herald, suggests that they represent a negative example of male sexuality, one that substitutes animal lust for self-control. Thus, the suitors’ attitude inverts the Greek principle that the husband should control his rapacious nature, causes the Danaids’ reaction, as they view the impending marriage as rape,¹² and inverts, in turn, the expected role of the wife’s submission to her husband.¹³ The antiphonal parts in the song by the chorus of the Danaids and the chorus of the Argive guards in the *exodos* recall the type of wedding song in which female reservations about marriage are reversed by the argumentation of men.¹⁴ Thus, although the play ends in a way reminiscent of the prelude to marriage, it is invested with a sinister tone, since persuasion fails, leading to the murders of the grooms. It is only in the case of Hypermestra that persuasion seems to have operated successfully.

It is plausible that hatred of specific marriage to their insolent suitors has led the Danaids to what appears in some passages to be a general aversion not only to marriage but also to men in general. Since the only type of marriage which presents itself to the Danaids is that by force, it is understandable that they view every prospect of marriage negatively.¹⁵ Pelasgus’ likening of them to Amazons (287)¹⁶ may suggest the martial and masculine nature of the Amazons (see [Chapter 3](#)), which will be recalled in the Danaids’ murders of their husbands. Aeschylus uses the image of the Amazon also in the *Oresteia*, whose theme largely focuses on the battle between the sexes. The foundation by Athena of the Council of the Areopagus in *Eumenides* reveals an important aspect of Athenian ideology concerning the two sexes, as the Areopagus is located in the very area where, according to tradition, the Athenians were attacked by the Amazons (685-90). The victory of the Athenians over the Amazons,

who rejected marriage and the conventions of male-dominated societies, was for the Athenians a glorious part of their heroic past as well as confirmation of the predominance of the male sex over the female threat. The very notion of the Amazon is identical with the female hostility against men, and it is not surprising that in *Eumenides* Aeschylus associates the quality of an Amazon with Clytemnestra who murdered her husband (627-8). If Clytemnestra resembles the Danaids, in terms of their Amazon-like qualities that result in the murders of their husbands, the two trilogies end in a reversed manner. Although the idea of the mother's parentage of a child is suppressed in *Eumenides*, it is marriage and motherhood that predominate in the union of Hypermestra and Lynceus.¹⁷ Another example of the way in which tragedy exploits the complex significance of the Amazons is Euripides' *Hippolytus*: here the audience are guided to perceive Hippolytus' rejection of sexual union and procreation as an exaggeration which threatens social norms by the fact that Hippolytus' mother was an Amazon (10) and as such she was a personification of the opposition to marriage.

Although Pelasgus' likening of the Danaids to Amazons occurs in a context which aims at stressing their exotic rather than their anti-social aspects, it is true that his reference may have reminded the Athenian audience of all these strong connotations associated with them. In a discourse of gender polarity, which seems to surpass the immediate conflict with their suitors to vilify the male race,¹⁸ the Danaids wish that they may never be subordinated to men (392-3) and pray to Zeus to give power and victory to women (1068-9). This contrasts with the herald's earlier wish that victory in the impending war may be given to men (951). What emerges here is a power-conflict between the two sexes,¹⁹ and the Danaids clearly present themselves not only as pleaders of their case but also as representatives of the female sex. Thus when in the first *stasimon* they invoke Zeus for help against the insolent men (528), namely, their suitors, they refer to themselves as the race of women which traces its origin to Io (531-3), and when in the second *stasimon* they express their satisfaction with the decree, they praise the Argives for not siding with the males in disregard for the women's cause (643-5).

Overall, the play raises the question of the hierarchy between sexes and makes the Danaids react assertively to the ideology that implies the inferiority of the female sex and views women as objects. The objectification of women is evident in the Egyptians' disrespectful treatment of them as property (337, 918). On the other hand, the hierarchy of sexes is first implied by Pelasgus, when he thinks of the impending war: 'how will the cost not be bitter, men's blood to stain the earth for women's sake?' (476-7). The hierarchy of sexes informs

the development of the play, especially in the confrontation between Pelasgus and the Egyptian herald. Aeschylus famously uses gender to illuminate ethnicity also in his *Persians*, where the confrontation between Greeks and barbarians is simultaneously presented as a confrontation between manliness and effeminacy. In *Suppliants*, Pelasgus' assertion that Argos 'is not a city of women' (913) associates fighting strength with virility and is picked up by the herald, who expresses the wish that victory and power come to the men (951). This scorn not only implies that Pelasgus has betrayed male solidarity²⁰ against women (alluded to by Pelasgus at 476-7 and praised by the Danaids at 643-5) but also conveys a derogatory charge of effeminacy, which Pelasgus immediately answers by a strong declaration of the virility, hence military ability, of the Argives.

What is important in Pelasgus' and the Argives' case is that they eventually decide to defend a female cause at all costs, not only because they fear ritual pollution but also because they decide in favour of the weak (487-9) against the violent (612), defending freedom (221, 609) against the threat of enslavement (611-12) (see [Chapter 6](#)). The insolence of the suitors is recognized by Pelasgus at 487 and perhaps also by the Argive assembly (983-5), who, by helping the Danaids, ultimately vote against unwilling marriage.²¹ Thus, in gender terms, Pelasgus and the Argives represent the proper male attitude, which is in stark contrast to the Egyptian attitude, characterized by insolence, violence, irreverence and lack of self-control. Although the play juxtaposes Argive and Egyptian males, Danaus seems to blur the distinction when he fears that his daughters may find themselves confronted with the lust of Argive men, as previously happened with their Egyptian suitors (996-1009). This fear, however, dramatically stresses the universality of erotic desire in nature, a fact which foreshadows Aphrodite's speech in *Danaids*. The vulnerability of the Argives to lust is also expressed only as a fear, and the underlying idea is that, as Argives champion persuasion over violence in politics, so they are expected to handle desire by means of persuasion as opposed to compulsion.²² The use of persuasion in courtship is alluded to by Pelasgus during his confrontation with the Egyptian herald (940-1). There he stresses that the Danaids may follow the Egyptians only if they are willing and if they are persuaded with pious arguments, whereas, if they are not willing, the Argive assembly has decided not to surrender them by compulsion. The word *ekdounai* used at 943 may be translated as 'to surrender' but also denotes 'to give (a daughter) in marriage'. Therefore, Pelasgus here juxtaposes marriage by consent to marriage by compulsion and asserts the determination of the Argive assembly to defend a person's right to self-determination (see [Chapter 6](#)).

To return to the Danaids, their attitude towards the conflict between the sexes shows that they confidently assert their free subjectivity and their right to self-determination against enslavement (221, 335). This attitude, however, does not imply hatred for all men but is rather triggered by the insolent behaviour of their cousins and their deprecatory treatment of women. In fact, the Danaids' attitude both towards their father and towards Pelasgus gives no hint of opposition to men and male authority. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they would have been perceived as typical women by the Athenian audience. Their exotic nature, due to their double ethnic origin, is an element which constantly lurks and is sometimes brought to the surface to remind the audience of the protagonists' extraordinary character. In a way, it is the interplay between familiarity and alienation that is meant to guide the audience's reception of the Danaids as they turn from victims into murderesses in the course of the trilogy. Throughout the play the Danaids rely on their father's presence and stress the helplessness of women: 'A woman left to herself is nothing' (749). Although this is both sincere, as it is addressed to their father and does not aim at manipulation, and true, as it partly applies to them, it is ironically undercut when viewed against their readiness to commit violence either in suicide or in murder.²³ Similarly, when Danaus advises them on how to behave in front of the king (194-203), namely, to display modesty in all respects, in a way which would be expected of a woman, his instructions amount to directions to his daughters for how to act 'like women'.²⁴ This serves to imply that the Danaids are not typical women and that their exotic nature goes beyond their immediately visible foreign appearance (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Furthermore, the Danaids have qualities which may have been regarded as typically female by the original audience, but they carry them to extremes and hence become dangerous.²⁵ Although their laments at the beginning of the drama highlight their helplessness, the tension of this endless grief, which results in suicidal thoughts, reveals a proclivity to extreme emotion, which will eventually result in murder. It was such extreme female manifestations of emotion (cf. Eteocles' reaction to the chorus in *Seven against Thebes* 242-3) that the Athenians tried to curtail through regulations for rituals of mourning.²⁶ Their cleverness is another female quality which can be dangerous when used for purposes of manipulation. As the Euripidean Creon says in *Medea* (319-20), a clever woman is more dangerous than one who is prone to emotion, and the Danaids manage to manipulate Pelasgus just as the Aeschylean Clytemestra or the Euripidean Medea use their cleverness to outwit their male interlocutors and achieve their goals.

Although the Danaids defiantly assert their freedom against subjugation to masculine control, they have to rely on the king's protection at Argos in the same way as they have constantly relied on their father.²⁷ Their obedience²⁸ and clinging to their father help to recall that the Danaids' cause, although it resembles a 'feminist' attempt²⁹ to claim their rights of emancipation with regard to their suitors, is also presented as an attempt to affirm Danaus' patriarchal rights which are threatened by the suitors.³⁰ In this respect, the Danaids are the female representatives in a male dispute, that between their father and their suitors. Thus Aeschylus shifts the focus to his female protagonists, yet ultimately reveals the disastrous outcome of their cause.

In psychological terms, the Danaids' implacable objection to marriage and complete allegiance to their father has sometimes been regarded as an obsessive fixation with the paternal figure and an unnatural prolongation of the state of maidenhood, which obstructs the passage into marriage, adulthood and motherhood.³¹ This problematic situation which negates the transition into adult life³² is intensified by Danaus' instructions to his daughters to honour chastity more than life (1013).³³ Such psychanalytic studies reflect a pre-feminist readiness to view the Danaids' opposition to marriage as pathological,³⁴ and ignore the fact that tragic characters are not real people.³⁵ Thus the play should not be treated as a case of sexual abnormality or neurotic female pathology but rather as a literary work which explores the Danaids' attitude to marriage in a wider context. Aeschylus shows that the Danaids' suppression of their sexuality is equally as dangerous as the suitors' uncontrolled lust. Both these extremes subvert the type of marriage which removes the hostility between sexes and promotes familial stability and social cohesion.³⁶ This is the type of marriage sanctioned by Aphrodite in *Danaids* and exemplified by the unforced union between Hypermetra and Lynceus, which brings resolution to the dramatic crisis and is rewarded by the foundation of the Argive dynasty (see [Chapter 2](#)). Such a type of harmonious marital union, which is based on consent as opposed to violence³⁷ and reconciles genders, is also frequently attested in artistic representations of weddings from the fifth century, in which the reassuring gaze of the groom at the bride suggests that persuasion has been substituted for violence.³⁸

As to the Danaids' specific reluctance to marry their cousins, an influential view has been to explain this attitude as a reaction against marriage with kin, viewed as incestuous.³⁹ When Pelasgus wonders whether the Egyptian cousins have legal authority over the Danaids as 'next of kin' (387-9),⁴⁰ he recalls the Athenian marriage system according to which when a father with no male heir died, his daughter

could be claimed in marriage by her father's next-of-kin. The technical term for the daughter was *epiklêros*, literally, 'upon the inheritance', often misleadingly translated as 'heiress', as she was considered to be part of the property that would be acquired by her nearest patrilineal male kin, usually her uncle or cousin, upon marriage.⁴¹ This practice of marrying an heiress to the next-of-kin, which aimed at keeping the inherited property within the family, is suggested by Pelasgus (338). That the law of endogamy (marriage with kin) applies to the Danaids' case and prescribes their marriage to their cousins also seems to be implied when they try to evade Pelasgus' question whether their motive is personal hatred or the law (336). The fact that Pelasgus is reluctant to help the Danaids if his help interferes with Egyptian law (387-9) further implies that the Danaids cannot justify their case on the basis of marital law and suggests that their suitors may indeed have a legal claim.⁴² What emerges in the play, however, is a distinction between human law and divine or unwritten law. This becomes clear at 384, when the chorus refer to those who cannot obtain their lawful rights on the basis of human law and have to rely on Zeus for justice. The Danaids describe the marriage with their cousins as impious (9) or contrary to *themis*, namely, justice or unwritten law (37), in a way which seems to suggest incest, as the reference is to marriage between first cousins (37-9).⁴³ The Danaids constantly appeal to the justice of their cause in general (e.g. 79, 168-70, 343, 395, 404-6, 437), although Pelasgus questions their general appeal to justice (344) and then interrogates them on Egyptian law.

The idea of incest and ritual impurity seems to have been prompted by the once popular interpretation of the phrase *autogenê phuxanorian* (line 8) as meaning 'fleeing men of our own race' rather than, as it is now widely held, 'self-generated (i.e. voluntary) flight from men'.⁴⁴ The idea of escape from kindred marriage also seems to be raised in Danaus' use of bird imagery (223-6), where the cousins' kinship to the Danaids underlies his characterization of the marriage as polluting.⁴⁵ Here the Danaids are compared to doves pursued by hawks,⁴⁶ which pollute their kin by eating other birds: 'if a bird preys on another bird, how can it be pure?' (226). The phraseology used here recalls the association between forbidden sexual relations and forbidden food, which often appears in Greek myth.⁴⁷ One such Greek myth which is particularly pertinent here is a well-known story⁴⁸ that combines the themes of marriage and death and is recounted by the chorus at 58-67. Tereus, the king of Thrace and husband of Procne, raped his wife's sister, Philomela, and cut out her tongue to prevent her from communicating the crime to her sister. When Philomela managed to inform Procne by weaving a tapestry depicting the crime,

the two sisters took revenge on Tereus by killing Itys, the son of Tereus and Procne, whom they cut into pieces and fed to his father. Tereus in rage pursued the sisters until the gods transformed Procne into a nightingale, who constantly mourns her dead son, and the speechless Philomela into an unmelodic swallow. The Danaids refer to the myth to parallel themselves with Tereus' wife, and implicitly to parallel their suitors with Tereus,⁴⁹ using bird-imagery similar to that later used by Danaus (223-6) for his daughters: Procne is described as a nightingale pursued by a hawk (60-2),⁵⁰ and she, like the Danaids, laments for the homeland she had to leave behind (64). Although the myth is recounted in the context of the Danaids' extreme helplessness and is meant to express their despair, the continuation of the parallel carries with it a sinister anticipation of future events. Thus Procne's murder of her own son (65-7) anticipates the Danaids' murders of their husbands, which is in turn a denial of motherhood.⁵¹ Tereus' illicit sexual advances and rape cast a dark shadow over the Egyptian suitors' pursuit of their cousins (see [Chapter 6](#)). However, although his behaviour is a reprehensible act against kin, the exact implication is not incest but violation of another person's will. A closer examination reveals indeed that kinship between the Danaids and their Egyptian suitors is not used to establish the idea of incest but rather to suggest that the use of violence is aggravated when it is directed against kin.⁵² A similar impression is created when Danaus reports that the Argives were angry at hearing what cousins did to kin of the same blood (983-4).

Incest may be said to be the result of extreme endogamy. Although the idea of incest was abhorred by the Greeks (cf. the myth of Oedipus), the prohibition of sexual relations normally applied to direct forebears or descendants.⁵³ By contrast, marriages even between siblings were not prohibited between the ruling classes of Egypt,⁵⁴ and Aeschylus' treatment of the theme of marriage may have evoked the distinctions between Greeks and Egyptians, especially as the Danaids have a double origin yet constantly try to affirm their Greek origin at the expense of the Egyptian. In Greece, marriages between first cousins were not considered to be incestuous, as they are recorded throughout the fifth and fourth centuries BC.⁵⁵ To mention one example from Greek tragedy, in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (915-19), Electra is said to be happily married to Pylades, the son of her father's sister (cf. 695-8).⁵⁶

On the other hand, even if marriage between cousins would not have been perceived as incestuous by the Greek audience, the law regarding the *epiklēros* cannot apply to the Danaids' case in a strict sense, because their father is still alive and personally objects to the prospect of this marriage (227).⁵⁷ Endogamy was not uncommon in

ancient Athens; as familial relations were strong, kinship was a criterion for marriage and fathers often decided to bestow their daughters on kinsmen. An example from the orator Isaeus (a valuable source on Athenian inheritance law) presents a case which has some bearing on the Danaids. In Isaeus 7 (11-12) it is reported that an uncle and his brother's son quarrelled because the uncle did not marry off his daughter to his nephew.⁵⁸ In the case of the Danaids, then, the suitors' insistence on marrying their cousins violates the Greek law according to which a father, as his daughters' legal guardian (*kurios*), has the right to decide about the future grooms of his daughters and, in turn, raises the question of forced marriage⁵⁹ as opposed to marriage by consent.

There are also reported cases in antiquity where daughters were allowed by their fathers to marry husbands of their own choice.⁶⁰ The lack of acquiescence⁶¹ in the specific marriage both on the part of the Danaids and of their father is stressed from the very beginning by the Danaids at 39, by Danaus at 227 and finally by Pelasgus when he confronts the herald (940), while the Danaids clearly express their revulsion against forced marriage in particular (798, 821, 1031-2). The imposed marriage is related to the Danaids' perception of their cousins as violent and insolent.⁶² The use of animal imagery throughout the play⁶³ succeeds in stressing the animal instincts of the suitors (762-3), and reduces them to a subhuman level. Not only are they imagined as unholy birds of prey (224, 510, 751) and wild beasts (351, 760) but they are also regarded as more vicious than snakes (511) and their representatives on stage are likened to vipers (896). The snake-imagery in particular stresses their monstrous aspect, as it parallels them to the man-slaughtering snakes that brought pollution to Argos in the past until Apis cleansed the land of these monsters (262-7). The association of the suitors with violence and bestiality accords with the contrast in the play between the marriage under duress threatened by the suitors and the gentle union, which the Danaids view in a positive manner, between Zeus, who uses no violence (99) but punishes violence (812), and Io.

Finally, some scholars have argued that the Danaids try to escape marriage with their cousins because they fear for their father's life.⁶⁴ This fear is related to an oracle that had been given to Danaus, saying that he would be killed by one of his grooms (see [Chapter 2](#)). A scholium on [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound* 853 explained that, because of this oracle, Danaus ordered his daughters to kill their husbands on the wedding night. The possibility that such an oracle operated in the trilogy, especially if it was revealed to the Danaids by their father, may seem appealing, especially if it was fulfilled at the end with Lynceus killing Danaus.⁶⁵ But no matter how appealing it

may seem, it is certainly not a *sine qua non*, as *Suppliants* contains no hint at this oracle, otherwise known only from late sources.⁶⁶ For example, if the Danaids have prior knowledge of the oracle,⁶⁷ it is strange that they do not mention it in their exchange with Pelasgus, as this would strengthen their argumentation. Similarly, if the Danaids had no prior knowledge of the oracle⁶⁸ but simply opposed marriage in obedience to their father,⁶⁹ this would contradict their early statement that their flight from men was ‘self-motivated’ (8).

The view that the oracle played a part in the trilogy is based on a scholium on Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* 37, where the scholiast’s remark is that marriage is objected to *dia to mê than-atôthênai ton patera*, often translated as denoting purpose: ‘so that their father is not killed’.⁷⁰ However, the phrase in fact denotes cause, not purpose and should rather be translated ‘because their father has not been killed’.⁷¹ On this view, the ancient scholiast implies that the suitors were not justified in claiming the Danaids in marriage, given that their father was not dead.

To conclude, the theme of the Danaids’ aversion to marriage is dramatized in a complex way, which evokes familiar motifs from a maiden’s initial hostility to marriage in general.⁷² Their revulsion against the insolent advances of their cousins results in their expressed hostility towards marriage in phraseology which seems to be encompassing marriage as an institution but never ceases to be directly related to the specific marriage with their cousins. Aeschylus does not simply dramatize in an extreme form the theme of the pre-nuptial maiden’s fear of marriage as domination. This becomes clear in the fact that the Danaids’ negative portrayal of marriage and their Egyptian suitors is not a mere metaphor but is actualized on stage through the insolent behaviour of the Egyptian herald and his followers. The Danaids’ hostility is illuminated by the discourse of gender clash, which also contributes to the presentation of ethnicity in the play (see [Chapter 6](#)). They do not reject marriage altogether⁷³ and the very fact that they are followed by a group of attendants who are called the dowry allocated to them by their father (977-9) implies that Danaus too is not opposed to the prospect of marriage. Similarly, when Danaus instructs them to value chastity more than life (1013) even at Argos, namely, when they are safe from the infatuation of their cousins, it is evident that the Danaids do not object to marriage generally or else it would not have been necessary for their father to instruct them. But the context clearly shows that Danaus’ fear is in case the Danaids find themselves in a situation similar to that in Egypt, namely, a lustful and violent pursuit. It is during this exchange with their father that the Danaids leave open the prospect of marriage in case gods decide accordingly (1016). This, in fact, anticipates the

Argive chorus' remark that Zeus' mind is impenetrable and the Danaids may eventually marry (1048-51).

The play contrasts marriage against will to marriage by consent and stresses the kind of gentle union modelled on that between Zeus and Io, which the Danaids themselves applaud. Freedom of choice and the right to deny what is contrary to one's will are what the Danaids assertively claim for themselves and what Pelasgus and the Argive assembly value and defend. Defence of these rights was carried to the extreme by the Danaids when they resorted to murder. On the other hand, Hypermestra defended the same rights, albeit in a positive manner, as she experienced the happy resolution of her ancestress Io through her gentle union with Lynceus.

Politics

The Athenian democracy, founded by Cleisthenes in 508/7 BC, underwent a series of changes which culminated in the reforms of 462/1. The ensuing radical democracy was associated with Ephialtes and Pericles. In 461 Athens made an alliance with Argos and ostracized Cimon, the advocate of a pro-Spartan Athenian policy. Produced most probably in 463, *Suppliants* is thus the product of vigorous political developments. Contemporary politics are variously reflected in Aeschylean dramaturgy, ranging from vague to more explicit allusions. The dramatization of the historical event of the battle of Salamis in *Persians* of 472 is largely based on the polarity between Greeks and barbarians, where the ethnic hierarchy (superiority of the Greeks over the Persians) is also informed by a hierarchy in terms of gender and constitution. Thus the confrontation between Greeks and barbarians is simultaneously a confrontation between manliness and effeminacy, and the Greek victory is at the same time the triumph of democracy over monarchy (*Persians*, esp. 213, 241-2, 403). But the polarity also reveals similarities: Greece and Asia, who are now at war, are bound by kinship (*Persians* 185), while the dramatic use of the perspective of the defeated Persians ultimately serves as caution for the dangers which lurk in the increase of Greek power. More direct allusions to contemporary events seem to be made in *Eumenides* of 458, as this play, which treats the foundation by Athena of the Areopagus, the aristocratic Council whose jurisdictions were curtailed by the Athenian democrats, substitutes Argos for the traditional Mycenae as the setting of Agamemnon's royal house and has Orestes make Argos an eternal ally of Athens (*Eumenides* 289-91, 762-4) in a way suggestive of the alliance between these two cities a few years earlier. In all these cases, however, the plays are first, and above all, literary products not to be reduced to either historical sources or political allegories, though of course they are products of their era and bound in some way to reflect contemporary experience.

Historicist readings of Greek tragedy attempt to find direct links between dramas and specific historical events and to determine the 'message' intended to be conveyed by the dramatist instead of examining the plays against the wider ideological background of their time.¹ Several such approaches to *Suppliants*² have tried to link the positive portrayal of Argos to times of friendly relations between

Argos and Athens³ and to associate the acceptance of the suppliants with certain historical events (see [Chapter 2](#)). Beside the debatable validity of reading history into dramas,⁴ the futility of such approaches is demonstrated by the fact that the dramatic plot leaves open a number of possibilities. Even after the publication of the *didascalia* which established that the *Suppliants* is not the earliest extant tragedy, a historicist reading of the play⁵ suggested that the play was composed in the 490s, following the defeat of Argos by Sparta at Sapeia in 494, but performed in Ephialtes' time. On this view, the dilemma faced by Pelasgus was linked to that of the Athenians in 499, when Aristagoras of Miletus came to Athens to ask for help in the Ionian revolt against the Persians (Herodotus 5.97), and the kinship between the Ionians and the Athenians was parallel to that between the Danaids and the Argives. However, it should be noted that an appeal to kinship on the part of a suppliant is a literary topos in suppliant Greek tragedies (cf. Euripides' *Children of Heracles* 209-12; Euripides' *Suppliants* 263-6).

An influential view that accords with a date of the play in the 460s has been that which related the suppliant Danaids, who are granted asylum at Argos, to Themistocles, who found refuge at Argos in 470 after his ostracism from Athens.⁶ On this view, Argos in the play copes with a similar dilemma to that faced by Argos in 470, since by accepting Themistocles the city risked war with Sparta and potentially also with Cimonian Athens,⁷ and Aeschylus seems to express gratitude to the city for supporting Themistocles, the hero of the battle of Salamis.⁸ However, this approach tends to isolate the dilemma of Pelasgus and to treat the decision of the democratic assembly as the main theme of the play, ignoring the fact that its central focus is the Danaids, the collective protagonist of *Suppliants*.

More recently it has been argued⁹ that the dramatic plot echoes the events of 462, when the Spartan Perikleidas came as a suppliant to Athens to ask for support against the uprising of the helots and Messenians at Ithome. Cimon, a champion of the pro-Spartan policy of Athens and an influential leader at the time, persuaded the Athenians to send an army to the Peloponnese. When, however, the Athenian army was sent back to Athens as redundant, the Athenians felt humiliated and Cimon was ostracized soon afterwards. On this view, Pelasgus' support of the Danaids was eventually disastrous for the Argives, because it led to war and possibly to the imposition of Danaus' tyranny, and the trilogy is taken to have been produced ahead of the vote of ostracism as a political weapon to strengthen Athenian feelings against Cimon, whose policy led to Athenian embarrassment.¹⁰

Overall, the familiarity of the Athenians with suppliance both from

literature and from real life (see [Chapter 4](#)) argues against the direct association of the Danaids' supplication at Argos with any specific historical date. Aeschylus' invention of the supplication motif is not meant to echo contemporary events,¹¹ but is explained dramatically: suppliancy stresses the Danaids' helpless position, which will be reversed in the course of the trilogy. Similarly, the portrayal of a 'democratic' Argos is not anachronistic, since the idea of democracy does not break dramatic illusion but is suitably accommodated to fit certain dramatic concerns.¹² Furthermore, little is known about the political situation at Argos except for the vague references about the constitutional reforms after the battle of Sapeia.¹³ The seemingly paradoxical description of Pelasgus as a 'democratic' king both evokes similar portrayals of Homeric kings and makes sense as it is addressed to spectators living in a democratic city.¹⁴

In a certain way, Pelasgus is the embodiment of all virtues associated with a good political leader in terms of his caring for his people and his willingness to consult with them in matters of great importance. This already appears in Homer,¹⁵ where, although equality is not yet established by law,¹⁶ the role of each man both on the battlefield and in the assembly is recognized as crucial and leaders are required to have persuasive power (*Iliad* 9.440-3) in order to forward their claims in the assembly. When issues of public concern arise in the Homeric world an assembly is called, and although only the leaders are entitled to speak, the assembled men have the power to influence the outcome: an extreme example is given in *Iliad* 2, where Agamemnon's consultation with the assembly ultimately results in Thersites rebuking the king (233-4). In *Odyssey* (14.239), too, Odysseus reports how he was unwillingly obliged to yield to the assembly's expressed wish to go to Troy. Although this forms part of Odysseus' false tale about his life, the compelling power of the assembly is telling, and we have to conclude from such examples that Homeric kings are conscious of the people's opinion. This is evident also in *Iliad* 22 (99-107),¹⁷ where Hector eventually decides to confront Achilles rather than safely retreat into the city and face the Trojans' disapproval and their complaint that he is responsible for their plight.

It is a similar fear, that of his people's censure in the case of calamity ('by honouring foreigners you brought ruin to the city', 401), that is stressed by Pelasgus while he ponders his excruciating dilemma.¹⁸ Even when he has decided to support the Danaids' case at the assembly, he fears public reproach and uses the maxim 'people are prone to censure authority' (485) to strengthen his position.¹⁹ 'Even though'²⁰ he has the power (399), Pelasgus clearly refrains from deciding alone on a public issue of great importance, chooses to invite

the citizens to decide, and respects their decision (365-9). This prepares for the important role of the Argive assembly in *Suppliants* and probably also in the rest of the trilogy. But the stress on Pelasgus as a ‘democratic’ king here also serves to starkly juxtapose two political mentalities: Although Argos enjoys a ‘democratic monarchy’, the Danaids, who are at pains to be accepted in Argos, cling to the absolute monarchy they are familiar with. Aeschylus treated this juxtaposition in *Persians*, where the queen’s wish to know who was the shepherd and commander of the Greek army was answered with the statement that the Greeks are called no man’s slaves or subject people (241-2). The Danaids’ response to Pelasgus reveals that they regard him as a sovereign monarch, who is accountable to nobody and exerts his unlimited power from his throne (370-5, cf. 425). They later refer to Zeus’ absolute power in similar terms (595-10). This implies that for the Danaids Pelasgus represents the equivalent power of Zeus on earth.²¹ In the Danaids’ case, the contrast between democracy and autocracy serves to highlight their foreign origin²² and consequently their ‘otherness’, thus undermining their claims to integration through ‘sameness’, namely, their affiliation to Argos through kinship.

The Danaids’ attempt to be incorporated into the city may have reminded the Athenian audience of the procedure of *dokimasia* (literally, ‘scrutiny’) that male adolescents (ephebes) underwent in order to be admitted to citizenship.²³ When an adolescent completed his eighteenth year, his father, who acted as his legal guardian (*kurios*), presented him to the assembly, where admission to citizenship was granted by the assembly’s vote on the condition that the adolescent managed to prove his age and Athenian descent (that both his parents were of Athenian origin).²⁴ In this respect, the Danaids’ provision of proofs to testify to their Argive origin both in their introductory self-identification (54, cf. 271 for Pelasgus’ credentials regarding his own origin) and in response to Pelasgus’ interrogation (276) evokes the credentials required of an ephebe prior to his becoming a full citizen. The Danaids are at pains to establish their Argive origin at the expense of their foreign status, and every intrusion of their foreignness into the play undermines their attempt. It is not accidental, then, that when Pelasgus envisages the people reproaching him, the Danaids are referred to as ‘foreigners’ (401).

The double ethnic identity of the Danaids, which aptly serves both to affiliate and to alienate them from Argos, is well condensed in Pelasgus’ use of an oxymoron when he describes them as citizen-foreigners (*astoxenôn*, 356, cf. 618). The Argive decree grants Danaus and his daughters asylum but not full citizenship. The provisions promised to the immigrants amount to a partial integration of non-citizens and, more specifically, they strongly evoke the status of the

metics or resident aliens (*metoikoi*) at Athens.²⁵ The term *metoikein* ('to settle in a place'), used by Danaus at 609 (cf. 994) to describe the Argive decision to allow his family to move to their land, may also evoke the technical term for 'metic' with all its associations for the rights of these inhabitants.²⁶ Freedom, protection against violence and self-determination are key issues in the asylum offered by the Argives to Danaus' family (609-14, 940-4). Pelasgus and the sovereign Argive people are called the protector (*prostatês*, 963) of the new inhabitants (963-5), where the term *prostatês* is the technical term for the Athenian citizen who acted as the patron and citizen-representative of a metic. Through his willingness to support the Danaids' cause at the Argive assembly, Pelasgus had also been called their patron (491, cf. 239, 919). The word used, *proxenos*, was in Athens the technical term for the Athenian citizen who acted as the spokesman for foreigners.²⁷ The change of Pelasgus from *proxenos* to *prostatês* of the Danaids signals the transition of the Danaids from foreigners to resident aliens by means of the Argive decree, which grants them limited incorporation into the city.²⁸ The status of the Danaids as metics explains the emphasis given to the housing arrangements²⁹ (957-61, 971, 1009-11) at Argos, as metics were not allowed to own house or land and had to rent their dwellings.³⁰

Athenian legislative regulation regarding the status of the metics usually dates from the period between Cleisthenes' democratic reforms (508/7) and Pericles' citizenship law (451/50).³¹ Pericles' law, which required Athenian descent from both parents as a criterion of full citizenship, was meant to safeguard the rights of citizens at a time of massive demographic changes at Athens, when the financial growth of Athens, largely resulting from her naval strength, caused the immigration of an increasing number of foreigners into Attica, which prompted, in turn, the need for a careful definition of the status of both citizens and metics. In this respect, the partial integration of the Danaids into Argos may be said to reflect contemporary Athenian concerns regarding immigration and civic identity.

As a spokesman, Pelasgus is presented as a persuasive orator, who knows how to influence the assembly in order to secure a favourable outcome (486-9, 518, 523, 615, 623).³² This portrayal prepares for the description of the Argive assembly, which is strongly reminiscent of the procedures in the assemblies of Athens. The Argive decree is both introduced (601) and expounded (609-14) in the formal language of Athenian decrees, while the voting by show of hands (604, 607, 621), which ratifies Pelasgus' request and passes the decree with full authority, inextricably links the people's vote with the very idea of democracy.³³ At 604, the phrase *dê mou kratousa kheir* ('the people's ruling hand') is a pun on 'democracy' (cf. 699) and provides our

earliest extant paraphrase of this word, whose metrical form does not easily fit into poetry.³⁴ In dramatic terms, the stress on the people's raising of their hands to vote as the communal act which grants the Danaids their request for refuge is also meant to parallel another significant gesture, that of Zeus' physical touch of Io, which put an end to her wanderings.³⁵

Pelasgus is the earliest example in tragedy of the 'democratic king', later usually represented by Theseus, who was the national hero of Athens.³⁶ In Euripides' *Suppliants* and in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Theseus embodies laudable characteristics of Athenian democracy. Athens as the champion of justice who does not hesitate to take risks in order to protect the weak and oppressed, is a familiar topos both in tragedy and in oratory and reflects a fundamental aspect of Athenian ideology.³⁷ In this respect, Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is an early forerunner of this attitude, where the 'democratic' Argos may stand for Athens.³⁸ The similarities between the two Euripidean suppliant dramas and Aeschylus' *Suppliants* are telling in this respect. In Euripides' *Children of Heracles* (c. 430-428 BC), which treats the support offered by Athens to Heracles' family against Eurystheus, Athens is glorified by the chorus as the city which always desires to side with justice and support the helpless (329-32). This typically Athenian quality is criticized by the hostile Argive herald as misguided (176-8). Like Pelasgus, Demophon (literally, 'voice of the people') wants to help the suppliants but is also concerned with the people's censure (415-24) and asserts that his monarchy is not like that of the barbarians (423). The confrontation between Demophon and the abusive Argive herald echoes the scene between Pelasgus and the Egyptian herald (see [Chapter 8](#)). In Euripides' *Suppliants* (c. 424-420 BC), a similar confrontation is staged between Theseus, who decides to support the suppliants, namely, the mothers of the seven Argive leaders who died at Thebes, and the Theban herald. Theseus in the play is the ruler, yet he is accountable to his people (247). He even claims that he has conceded his monarchy to the people, by giving them freedom and equal votes (352-3), and strongly asserts the value of democracy over monarchy in his debate with the herald (403-510).

The confrontation between Pelasgus and the Egyptian herald stresses the polarity between Greeks and barbarians. This polarity, however, has played a fundamental role from the beginning of the play, as part of the conflict between the Danaids and the Aegyptiads. The Danaids consistently attempt both to stress their Greek origin and to suppress their foreign identity, and consequently to disassociate themselves from their cousins despite their common ancestry.³⁹ Accordingly, the play marks a gradual shift in the way the Danaids define their ethnic identity: although at the beginning they refer to

Egypt⁴⁰ in a nostalgic way, which is understandable when they lament their flight and exile using the mythical example of Procne (64),⁴¹ and, although when physically threatened by the Egyptians on stage they invoke the river Nile as something dear to them (854-7), in the *exodos* they announce that they will no longer sing of the Nile but will reserve all their singing for Argos (1023-9).⁴² This is a climactic moment, which marks the Danaids' integration into Argos.

Although in *Suppliants* the Aegyptiads are presented through the perspective of the Danaids and Danaus,⁴³ the behaviour of the Egyptian herald is rather meant to exemplify the suitors' negative characteristics as typically barbarian. As the Aegyptiads make no claims to kinship with Argos, their side is exclusively associated with that of the barbarians. Contrary to the Greeks, the Egyptians are portrayed as violent, insolent and disrespectful towards the gods (750-2, 755-9, 884, 893-4, 903-4, 921, 927). Both Danaus (746-7, 760-1) and Pelasgus (945-9, 952-3) assert the superiority of the Argives over the Egyptians, implying the superiority of Greeks over barbarians. The polarity is drawn in terms of gender (Greek masculinity vs barbarian effeminacy),⁴⁴ of attitudes towards the gods (Greek piety vs barbarian impiety) and of attitudes towards humans (Greek respect for personal freedom vs barbarian despotism).

The confrontation between Pelasgus and the herald illuminates another aspect of Pelasgus' earlier dilemma. If respect for the gods⁴⁵ and fear of ritual pollution were decisive factors in Pelasgus' decision to help the Danaids, he also admitted that the suitors' behaviour was outrageous and expected the sight of the suppliants to arouse the pity of his citizens (486-9). The Argives' championing of the weak is demonstrated when they react against the suitors' insolence, as Danaus reports (980-4). In the scene with the herald it is the barbarian insolence of the Egyptian envoy which prompts Pelasgus to reassert the Argive decree protecting the Danaids against any threat. The scene thus gives weight to the idea that the Argive decision is in alignment with the democratic championship of freedom and consent against violence.⁴⁶

Although the Argives criticize the negative associations of the barbarians, their incorporation of the Danaids does not neutralize the latter's inherent barbarian side, first revealed both in their exotic appearance and in their emotional outbursts (see [Chapter 7](#)). Although the Danaids constantly speak against the violence and impiety of their suitors, they themselves will eventually commit murderous acts and bring pollution.⁴⁷ Thus the ethnic polarity is subverted and the play seems to raise questions about the very nature of Greekness and its relation to non-Greekness, especially as it dramatizes a myth where the categories 'Greek' and 'foreign' merge. As the myth of Io and her

descendants was associated with Greek colonization and could be used to justify appropriating foreign lands (see [Chapter 3](#)), the union between Hypermetra and Lynceus at the end and the future foundation of the Argive dynasty may be viewed as an envisaged reconciliation between the Greek and barbarian sides.

Finally, although Egypt was often admired in classical antiquity,⁴⁸ there were certain negative stereotypes of the Egyptians which persisted throughout, notably the characteristics of fraudulence,⁴⁹ promiscuity, greed, arrogance and cowardice.⁵⁰ In this respect it is interesting that the Aeschylean play is an early example of a negative view of the Egyptians. Several decades later, stereotypes about Greeks and barbarians in general were used and subverted in Euripides' *Helen* (412 BC),⁵¹ where the dramatist specifically chooses Egypt as the dramatic setting to dramatize a story which bears a number of similarities to Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. The essential scenario is one of pursuit by a lustful Egyptian and ultimate rescue by a Greek man, Menelaus.⁵² As Helen explains at the beginning, while Proteus was the king of the country she was safe but now that he has died his son Theoclymenus wants to marry her against her will (296-8, 833). Theoclymenus' wish is called *hubris* ('outrage') just as the suitors' lust is repeatedly called hubristic in *Suppliants*. Helen sits as suppliant at Proteus' tomb in order to avoid marriage (64-5, 799) and considers death preferable to this fate (293, 298). The polarity between Greeks and barbarians is expressed both in terms of Theoclymenus' execution of every Greek he arrests in his land (155) and in the different types of government outlined in the play. Thus, Helen notes that in a barbarian land all people except a single person are free (276), evoking the standard association of Greeks with freedom and of barbarians with slavery. Menelaus also implicitly criticizes the type of monarchy that is based on compulsion, when he notes that he led the expedition to Troy not as a despot using force but commanding Greeks with their consent (394-6). However, although the plot is based on the stereotypical polarity between Greeks and barbarians, Euripides questions it, since Egypt is also represented by Theonoe, Theoclymenus' righteous sister (998-1029), and their late father, Proteus, whose piety is stressed in the play (46-7, 942, 966-7, 1011-12).

Performance

Setting

The absence of any reference to a building façade in *Suppliants* suggests that there was no building at the back of the acting space (*skênê*). The dramatic setting is a sacred precinct vaguely described as located near the Argive coast (15, 31). The choice of a public sanctuary instead of the king's palace as the location of supplication serves to accentuate the public character of the supplication. This distinction, noted by Pelasgus (365-6), visually stresses a central thematic issue: the chorus' problem is a problem to be faced by the entire city and not by the king alone. The sacred place is described as an open-air sanctuary, with an altar (84, 190, 372) shared by several gods (222), where the chorus are seated (208, 224, 365, 413, 852), and a number of divine statues (189, 212-22, 242, 333, 355, 463, 465, 725, 755, 885), shaded by suppliant branches (354). A similar setting in an open-air holy place is found in *Seven against Thebes*, where several gods are represented by their statues and much dramatic action is based on the chorus' supplication of these divine images (e.g. 185, 265).

The statues in *Suppliants* are probably in a proper arrangement behind the altar so as not to block the view or the way to the altar, which is of central dramatic significance as the place where the Danaids are seated for protection.¹ The frequent references to these statues accentuate the religious atmosphere of the play (see [Chapter 4](#)), while the chorus' threats to hang themselves from them (463, 465) imply that they are above human height. This may serve as a constant visual reminder that the religious framework encompasses and controls human actions. It is reasonable to assume that their number equals that of the Danaids, which further implies that the twelve statues probably represented the twelve Olympian gods.² In this case the Danaids' rejection of Aphrodite and their view of Hera as an enemy, since she caused Io's suffering, may be highlighted by the presence of these goddesses among the statues. The Argives' praise (1031ff.) of these two deities in the *exodos* may suggest the piety of the Argive people, which is evident in the presence of all deities in their sanctuary. The reference to a flat space in front of this sanctuary (508), representing a grove, serves to signify the area where the

chorus sang and danced (*orchêstra*). Similarly in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 836 the phrase 'flat area' is used by Teiresias when he asks his daughter to lead his way to what the audience recognize as the *orchêstra*.

When Pelasgus invites the Danaids to leave the sanctuary and enter the grove in front, the maidens hesitate to abandon the protection of the sacred place and to enter a profane space (508-9, cf. 223). This spatial arrangement, which distinguishes between the back and the front by means of a vertical axis,³ stresses both the divine and the human parameter involved in the difficult situation faced by the chorus. It functions as a visual reminder that the background is associated with the gods, whereas the foreground is a place where the chorus can rely on human support, as when Pelasgus reassures them by asserting his determination to protect them (508-10). The sanctuary is not only placed at the rear of the *orchêstra* but is also elevated from the ground. Danaus refers to it as a mound (*pagon*, 189) when he urges his daughters to take refuge there, while Pelasgus' request to the Danaids to move to a 'flat space' (508), namely, the *orchêstra*, makes sense if they are meant to descend from a higher level. Similarly, when the Danaids earlier compare themselves to a heifer chased by wolves upon precipitous rocks (350-1), their simile suggests that they are positioned upon higher ground.⁴ Although the height may have been left to the imagination of the audience,⁵ it is more reasonable to think that it was realistically represented,⁶ as the difference of levels is often noted during the dramatic action (see below on stage action).

Overall, the *orchêstra* is the area where the chorus sing and dance during their *stasima* as well as the place occupied by Pelasgus during his two appearances (234-417 and 911-74), by the Egyptian chorus led by a herald (825-951) and by Danaus on his last appearance (980-1017) together with all their followers. On the other hand, a higher level representing sacred ground is occupied by Danaus on his first appearance and by the chorus during their first exchange with Pelasgus (234-523), as well as during the scene with the Egyptians and Pelasgus (825-965). The fact that this higher space is used by the chorus and only once by an actor suggests that this moderately raised space is not a stage.

Because of its height the mound also provides Danaus with a look-out from where he observes the route towards the city (180-5) and the sea (713-14). These opposite directions have topographical significance and are visually represented by the two side-walks (*parodoi*) used for the entries and exits of characters. The city and the sea signify safety and danger respectively. At the beginning of the play, the chorus enter the *orchêstra* through a *parodos* indicating that

they are coming from the shore (1). The same direction is followed also by Danaus' first entry and later by the Egyptians. By contrast, Pelasgus' entrance and Danaus' later entrances are probably made by the opposite *parodos*, indicating that they come from the city. The placement of the setting in between the shore and the city is a visual reminder of the transitional state of the Danaids at the beginning of the trilogy, as it looks both back to their past and forward to their future. Thus, the shore reminds the audience of the sea-voyage of the Danaids which brought them to the Argive land and anticipates the similar journey of the Egyptians. At the same time, the city of Argos represents the practical solution for the Danaids and their final destination, as is announced in *Suppliants* (954-65) and dramatized in the rest of the trilogy. The horizontal dichotomy⁷ between the left and the right direction of the setting is also involved in dramatic action in a way which draws the attention of the audience to their significance: Danaus first discerns the advent of the Argives from the city and then the coming of the Egyptians from the sea. Similarly, the Egyptians who threaten the Danaids try to drag them off towards the sea (836, 886), whereas the *exodos* stages a joint departure to the safety of the city.

As to dramatic time, it was a convention of Greek tragedy that action tended to be condensed into a single day (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b12). The sequence of dramatic events includes Pelasgus' entry and exchange with the Danaids, Danaus' going to the city, where he lays boughs on the altars, the public assembly at Argos, Danaus' coming back to inform his daughters of the public decree, the arrival of the herald and his confrontation with Pelasgus, and finally the joint departure to Argos. All these could theoretically be accommodated in the duration of a single day. The play offers no indication as to the time of action, except for a single detail: Danaus tries to assuage the fear of his daughters at the impending arrival of the suitors, by saying that the landing of the Egyptians should be delayed, given that the sun is about to set and the country has no harbour to facilitate landing (768-9). This may suggest that the ensuing third *stasimon* (776ff.) covers the duration between night and the following dawn, in which case the fourth episode (825ff.), which starts with the entry of the Egyptian herald and his followers, would take place on the following morning. But this would conflict with the unity of time in Greek tragedy.⁸ The prolongation of time would serve to increase suspense about what will happen when the Egyptians land, but the *stasimon* is better understood as an example of time compression in Greek tragedy.

Performers

The play belongs to the period prior to the increase of the number of actors to three⁹ and that of the chorus members to fifteen (by Sophocles): it was originally performed with two male actors and a group of twelve men who formed the chorus of the Danaids,¹⁰ while the stage was also filled with several mute extras in supporting roles. The speaking parts are shared between the actors, and the chorus perform the lyric parts. When the chorus engage in spoken dialogue with an actor, it is generally assumed¹¹ that this is done not by the chorus in unison but by one chorus member, namely, the chorus-leader. One actor played the part of Pelasgus and another played the parts of both Danaus and the Egyptian herald. The allocation of the roles of Danaus and the representative of the Egyptian suitors to the same actor serves to underline the similarities which lurk behind these two polarized parts: although *Suppliants* portrays the Danaid family as victims and the Egyptian suitors as violent pursuers, the development of the trilogy reverses this when the Danaids, probably at Danaus' instigation, use violence to murder their grooms.

An important feature of the play is that it does not employ a single chorus.¹² The use of a secondary chorus is attested also in *Eumenides* (processional escorts) and in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (Hippolytus' companions) and *Suppliants* (young boys). The uniqueness of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* is that it arguably employs two subsidiary choruses along with the main chorus of the Danaids. Both these supplementary choruses may of course have been represented by the same group of people assuming different personae in the original production.¹³ The manuscripts do not always specify the names of speakers but simply indicate changes of speakers by a symbol (-) in the text. When this is not made explicit in the manuscripts, one has to rely on internal evidence and deduce the identity of the speakers from the context. This is the case at the beginning of the fourth episode where the text between 825 and 902 has been severely damaged during transmission. This is the scene where the Egyptian herald appears and utters his first spoken lines, in iambics, at 882. Prior to this, the scene dramatizes a sung exchange between the chorus of the Danaids and an adversary, who may be either the herald or a second chorus, consisting of Egyptian attendants. In the former case, the herald would have been given both a sung and a spoken part in this scene. In the latter case, the audience would have been watching an exchange between two choruses, in the same way in which the *exodos* dramatizes a lyric exchange between two choruses with opposed views (1018-73). Whereas the herald's spoken iambics convey a sense of composure, the lyric passage which aims at intimidating the Danaids

is high in excitement, and this contrast rather suggests that it is uttered by a chorus.¹⁴

In the *exodos*, where two parties sing in alternation, one against and another in favour of marriage (1018-73), critics have tried in vain to accommodate the divergent voices without assuming the introduction of a supplementary chorus. But since the Danaids have consistently argued against marriage throughout the play and no earlier hint has been given to a change of mind, the possibility that the main chorus split into two semi-choruses¹⁵ is unlikely. In dramatic terms this possibility makes one wonder how a semi-chorus change their minds suddenly here and support the idea of marriage only to revert to their former stance in the next play and murder their grooms. The only deviation, according to myth, is Hypermestra's different attitude to the idea of marriage, but this cannot be foreshadowed here, as there is no place at this early stage in the story for her to be differentiated from the others.¹⁶ On the other hand, the view that the dissonant voice is that of Danaus¹⁷ is equally difficult to accept, given that Danaus not only agrees with his daughters on the issue of marriage but is presented as the person who guides his daughters' attitude throughout the play.

Thus the majority of critics are now inclined to accept the presence of a second chorus in the *exodos*, though their exact identity is debatable. At 1022ff. the Danaids address a group of attendants and invite them to listen to their song of praise for the city of Argos. One possibility is that the addressees are the Danaids' handmaidens,¹⁸ who must have been present on stage along with their mistresses but are first mentioned by the Danaids at 977-9. This reference is our only evidence that a group of handmaidens have accompanied the Danaids from the very beginning of the play;¹⁹ whether this group did not simply consist of mute extras but turned into the second chorus who sing in the *exodos* is a debatable issue. It is true that the address at 977 to the otherwise silent maids may be said to prepare for the latter's part in a supplementary chorus.²⁰ But the address to accept a song which glorifies Argos would have been more appropriately made not to their slaves but to a group of Argives, who here most probably form the supplementary chorus.²¹ The word *opadoi* used by the Danaids at 1022 to denote these attendants is the same as that used by Danaus earlier when he pointed to his bodyguards on stage (985). These Argive guards, who are now the Danaids' Argive protectors, are the only representatives of the city of Argos in the *exodos*. Their response to the Danaids' invitation to accept their song (1022) introduces a balanced appraisal of the value of sexual union and marriage, associated with Aphrodite and Hera.²² The rehabilitation of these two goddesses in the words of an Argive chorus, who here

counterbalance the Danaids' biased rejection of their domains, is in agreement with the favourable portrayal of Argos in the play and foreshadows the development of the plot in the course of the trilogy, leading to Aphrodite's role in establishing the universal role of marriage.

Props

Masks and costumes help to define the external appearance of actors and provide visual information regarding gender, age, social status and nationality. In a play where the distinction between Greeks (Pelagus) and foreigners (Egyptian herald) is both raised and merged in the double origin of the Danaids, ethnic origin is also brought to the fore by means of external appearance. The Danaids are young maidens (480, 997, 1015) and their masks must have indicated their young age. An early allusion to their dark skin is made at 71, where they describe their cheeks as 'warmed by the sun'. A clearer reference is made at 154-5, where their self-description as darkened by the sun implies that not only their masks but probably also the exposed parts of their body were presented as dark.²³

The Danaids' high social status is apparent both in their accompaniment by slaves (977-9) and in their attire, which is conspicuously luxurious and exotic. The first indication is made by the Danaids themselves, who mention the veils made of Sidonian linen (120-2 = 131-3) over their heads. Linen was a typical fabric for Egyptians,²⁴ considered by the Greeks to be delicate and luxurious. Its quality here is enhanced by the reference to the Sidonian craftsmen who had been famous for their fine work ever since Homer (cf. *Iliad* 6.289-91). They also wear headbands (235, 431), which are probably golden diadems holding together their hair.²⁵ In ancient artistic representations the hair of Egyptian women is usually portrayed as longer and bulkier than that of the Greeks, and the mention of the headbands here may imply a similar portrayal of the Danaids.²⁶ Their outfit consists of delicate robes (432) furnished with breast-bands and girdles (457). The first comment on the foreign character of their outfit comes from Pelagus (234-7),²⁷ who contrasts their luxurious barbarian robes and headbands with what Argives and Greeks in general wear. His subsequent great surprise (277) when he hears of their Argive origin (274) and his comparison of them to women from various foreign places starting from Libya (279-89) are probably to be understood as deduced both from the Danaids' dark complexion and from their exotic costumes.

Apart from a visual reminder of luxury, high social status and

foreign origin, the costume takes an active part in the dramatic action. In the entry-song (*parodos*) the maidens verbally express their constant tearing of their delicate veils (120-2 = 131-3) as a sign of their grief.²⁸ This scene, where the Danaids have an active part, is recalled at 428-32, where they envisage in dread the prospect of the Egyptians dragging them off by their headdresses and laying their hands on their robes. The mirror-scene²⁹ here combines the same act of tearing of the costume in order to highlight the change of the Danaids from agents to victims. What they fear here will be played out on stage later when the herald threatens that he will not hesitate to drag them by their hair (884, 909) and tear their robes (904) unless they follow him immediately. In the *parodos* the act of tearing their garments accompanied the Danaids' singing of their own dirge (116). This mourning-in-anticipation is associated with their determination to commit suicide if they receive no help from the gods (154-61). The suicide by hanging which they first mention here is later developed in their exchange with Pelasgus, where they threaten that the breast-bands and girdles of their robes will provide the means for hanging (457-65).

Danaus is portrayed as an old man (177, 480, 606, 775), with a dark complexion, which is said to be typical of the inhabitants of Egypt (496-8; cf. Herodotus 2.57 and 2.104), and his costume is that of a sailor: at 177 he describes himself as a sea-captain, as he accompanied his daughters during the sea-voyage, while Pelasgus calls him a sailor at 503. The ordinary costume in this play will probably be replaced in the plays that follow with a royal garment, when he succeeds Pelasgus as king of Argos. Pelasgus is described as an old man (361) and, although he is the king, his royal status is not immediately recognized by either the Danaids (247-8) or the Egyptian herald (932-3). The Danaids wonder whether he is a private citizen, a warden bearing a sacred wand or a ruler (247-8). He must be holding a royal sceptre, as the Danaids mistake it for a herald's staff. Danaus from his look-out sees an approaching army fully equipped with shields, spears, horses and chariots and assumes that the local authorities are coming (180-5). A more realistic representation of the scene, with Pelasgus on a chariot as well as with many armed men and chariots, cannot be ruled out,³⁰ as this would stress the notion of Argive strength. But Danaus' description of a powerful army probably substitutes for representation on stage. The Danaids' failure to distinguish Pelasgus' royal status may be said to accentuate their foreign origin and their unfamiliarity with Argos. At the same time it implies that Pelasgus' presence is discreet as opposed to conspicuous. Thus it is probable that Pelasgus enters the stage accompanied only by mute extras who represent his attendants and guards. The presence of

a retinue both suggests that his status is above the ordinary and functions as a visual reminder of Argive power. Some of these attendants will later be given by Pelasgus to Danaus (500). At the same time, the lack of conspicuousness in Pelasgus' royal outfit may serve as a hint at the fact that he is portrayed as a ruler who consults with his people and not as an autocrat who wishes to stand out from the Argives.

The Egyptians are presented as having a dark complexion. Thus the entire Egyptian army is said to be black both by the Danaids (745) and by Danaus when from his look-out he distinguishes the Egyptians in the first ship as their black limbs are shown from their white garments (719-20). The contrast of the black against the white in the colour imagery accentuates the tautology between 'black' and 'Egyptian', and may also indicate both the complexion and the colour of the attire of the Egyptian herald and the chorus of his Egyptian followers when they appear on stage. At 888 the herald who attempts to drag the Danaids by force is called 'a black dream', where the word 'black' signifies both the actual colour of the herald's complexion and the idea of something ominous. The herald is a young man (894). Both he and the Egyptians may have been portrayed as having either very short hair or shorn heads in accordance with the typical representation of Egyptian men in vase-paintings, which contrasts with the usually long hair of Greek men.³¹

In accordance with their status as suppliants, the Danaids carry boughs wreathed with white wool (22, 191-3, 334). The mention already at 22 of the white wool is an important detail, as it describes a supplication made in Greek as opposed to Egyptian manner where wool was not used.³² The supplicatory bough acquires a prominent place as a prop, since it may be viewed as the symbol of the Danaids' extreme helplessness throughout the play. In stage terms, it is the visual reminder of Aeschylus' innovation in portraying the Danaids as helpless victims (see [Chapter 3](#)). The very first reference to these boughs is immediately preceded by the word *egkheiridiois*, which literally means 'carried in the hand' (21). This word, however, also denotes hand-knife or small sword, so it may recall the Danaids' daggers used to murder their husbands. The choice, then, of this particular word³³ at the point when the Danaids draw attention to what they hold in their hands for the first time (note the demonstrative pronoun 'these' at 21) paradoxically fuses the aspects of the Danaids as victims and murderesses and foreshadows the development of the plot in the sequel.³⁴ The Danaids carry the boughs in their left hands (193) as their right hand needs to be left free for supplicating their human protector. Boughs have also been placed on the altar (345, 354-5) and Pelasgus later recognizes that this act

complies with the ritual of supplication. Danaus too carries suppliant branches and shares in the ritual (481-2, 503).

Stage action

The text contains a number of references regarding the gestures and movements of the actors on stage. The Danaids' mention of smiting their heads and tearing their cheeks in lamentation implies relevant gestures on stage (68-72). The allusion to tears (72, 112) and the mention of their heart not used to tears in the past (72) may be an indication that their tension makes them also seem to shed tears during the scene. The masks do not allow a realistic representation but the emotional outburst may have been conveyed by appropriate gestures. Their cries (114) and their likening of their song to a dirge (115-16) also suggest a high degree of emotion, which may have been accentuated by loud voices. Before Danaus speaks at 176, the Danaids mention his name at 11, but there is no indication whether he was present during the chorus' entry-song (*parodos*). Given the strong bond between Danaus and his daughters, it is reasonable to assume that he enters silently during the side-walk (*parodos*), following his daughters,³⁵ and gradually takes his position on the mound. From this look-out he announces the coming of the Argive army (180-5). This is the first of the two so-called 'extended entry announcements' in the play, namely, an announcement of an approach sighted and expounded at length before the actual entry, with a view to giving added dramatic importance to the new arrival.³⁶

During his exchange with his daughters Danaus functions as an internal stage director in guiding their behaviour towards the Argives. This role here prepares the audience for the secondary part that Danaus will play when Pelasgus comes (234ff.). His long silent presence in the background there (234-489) may be felt as awkward, yet it allows Aeschylus to bring the Danaids to the foreground and have them plead their case before Pelasgus.³⁷ Danaus' advice to them to keep a tranquil countenance and to show caution and moderation in their speech (197-203) foreshadows the overall appearance of the chorus as well as the calm exchange between the chorus-leader and Pelasgus (274-347). His encouragement to them to hurry and take their place in the sanctuary (188-9) implies that the Danaids start climbing on to the mound. At 207-8 Danaus is seated on the mound and his daughters approach him. During their invocation of the gods at 209-221 they probably place boughs beside the divine images.³⁸ At 222-4 he urges his daughters to revere the altar shared by all the gods and advises them to sit there.

When Pelasgus appears, Danaus remains silent for the most part and is mentioned at 321 with due honour, as his wisdom, a standard element of the myth (see [Chapter 3](#)), is already known to Pelasgus (320) who now comes to realize that this prominent figure is the companion of the maidens. As Danaus' silence is explained by the shift of the emphasis to the Danaids, it cannot be breached at this point, but Danaus is directly addressed by Pelasgus towards the end of the episode at 480, when he receives instructions from Pelasgus, and he assumes a speaking part at 490-9, where he requests attendants. Pelasgus' orders to his followers to accompany Danaus (500) are a stage direction implying that some of his attendants now leave the stage along with Danaus. His second stage direction is his encouragement to the Danaids to leave their boughs on the altar (506) and to leave the sanctuary (508-9). They originally hesitate to abandon the protection of the sanctuary, but they are persuaded by Pelasgus' reassurances and descend as he leaves the stage at 523. Their leaving the sanctuary is dramatically necessary, as at 524 the chorus need to be in the *orchêstra* to perform the first *stasimon*. But at the same time their being persuaded by Pelasgus here serves to stress their confidence in his assistance and shifts the attention of the audience to the attitude of Argos towards their plight.

The Danaids remain in the *orchêstra* when Danaus arrives from the city at 600. The main theme in this brief second episode (600-24) is Danaus' announcement of the Argives' decision to grant asylum to the family. In terms of topographical significance, the public space represented by the *orchêstra* is an appropriate acting place for a scene permeated by the stress on the human assistance as well as by an optimistic tone (cf. 'take courage', 600). The optimistic atmosphere which continues throughout the second *stasimon* (625-709) is reversed at the beginning of the third episode, when Danaus appears on the look-out of the mound and announces the coming of the Egyptian army (710ff.). This extended announcement scene mirrors that in the first episode, as it both announces future events and ends with advice to the Danaids to take refuge in the sanctuary (188ff., 730ff.). The parallel highlights the similarities as well as the differences between the two scenes: the first caused anxious expectation, as the Danaids were to face their potential protectors, whereas the second arouses fear, as they now expect to confront their enemies.³⁹ It is not evident whether the Danaids respond immediately and occupy the altar during the exchange with Danaus. In fact lines 730-1 imply that they are to take refuge at the altar only if Danaus delays to bring help. Although the sanctuary represents the site of utmost protection for the Danaids (190), they express the fear that their Egyptian suitors will not be hindered by the sacred place (751-2). This may imply that they do not

occupy the altar until the Egyptians try to drag them away at 832.

However, at 748 the Danaids' begging of their father not to leave them may imply that they are together with him in the sanctuary. As Danaus earlier used demonstrative terms when referring to the altar and the divine images (725, 731), so too the Danaids use a demonstrative pronoun at 755 to point to the trident, namely, the attribute of Poseidon, which suggests that they are on the mound along with their father. A similar reference to the trident was also made at 218 when the Danaids identified the divine images in the sanctuary and prayed to them.⁴⁰ It seems plausible that Danaus' mention of the prospect of the Danaids' capture by the Egyptians at 727-8 causes a fearful reaction, which may have been indicated by his daughters' gestures, as it prompts his reassurance (729). His instruction to his daughters to take refuge in the sanctuary if he delays to return with Argive help (730-1) may be taken as a stage direction. It is possible that in order to accentuate the impression of the fear felt by the Danaids, Aeschylus, apart from giving them emotive lyrics from 736ff., also made them climb up to the sanctuary. Following Danaus' reassurances at 764ff., it is reasonable to assume that the Danaids return to the *orchêstra*, where they need to be at 776 in order to perform the third *stasimon*. Danaus' exit at 775 is also dramatically dictated, as the actor who plays his part is required to change costume and mask and return as the Egyptian herald in the fourth episode. But dramatic necessity is not devoid of dramatic function: once again the focus shifts to the Danaids, who have to be left alone in order to face their enemies. In this sense, the dramatic effect of the previously staged panic at being left without their father serves to stress their protagonistic role in what follows.

At 776 the chorus are in the *orchêstra* to perform the third *stasimon* and the opening of the fourth episode finds them there, until suddenly they flee to the sanctuary to escape capture from the Egyptians. The excitement caused by the urgency and the danger must have been represented by sudden movement on stage, as the Egyptians enter the *orchêstra* and chase the maidens, who anxiously rush to the altar for protection (832). The dramatic effect is heightened by the Egyptians' orders to the Danaids to leave the sanctuary or be killed (836-42, 847-53). The audience must be anxious to see whether the Egyptians and the herald will carry out their threats of physical violence and violate the sanctuary, as the chorus had earlier feared (750-2), or whether the sanctuary will be successful in protecting them. This anxiety escalates from 885ff., as the herald and the Egyptians approach the altar in order to capture the maidens. The text provides a hint as to the movement of the herald and possibly also of his Egyptian men: in a simile the Danaids

compare their pursuer who tries to drag them towards the sea to a spider moving with slow steps (887). This simile may have been enacted on stage with the step-by-step advances of the herald and his men, whose black limbs had earlier been described by Danaus (719-20). The chorus' realization that the sacred images delude them (885-6) suggests their certainty that the approaching adversaries will violate the sanctuary, and their references to the Egyptian's advances (886-7, 895) imply that this violation is either being enacted or felt to be imminent and inescapable. Throughout the scene, references to loud voices (829, 849, 872, 875, 900, 910) as well as the use of emotional cries (831, 876, 899) signal the intense aural impact of the lyric parts of both the Danaids and their enemies, which here matches the strong visual impact of the movements on stage.

Pelasgus' opportune arrival at 911 comes as a suitable response to the Danaids' cries for help (905, 908). These loud cries augment tension, as it is suggested that Pelasgus arrives at the time when the Danaids are or are about to be subdued.⁴¹ The use of a cry to provide motivation for an entry follows the convention that cries on stage may be heard off stage.⁴² At 925 Pelasgus' threat to the herald not to touch the girls may imply that no physical force was enacted on stage until 911,⁴³ though this is not clear. It is possible that the Egyptians carried out their threats and started dragging the Danaids from the sanctuary to the *orchestra* between 903 and 911.⁴⁴ Thus, the herald's threat to carry off the Danaids unless someone releases them (924) involves a demonstrative pronoun which suggests that the maidens are now in the *orchestra*, under the control of the Egyptians. This threat provokes Pelasgus' determined response (925), probably accentuated by a threatening approach towards the herald. Pelasgus' stress on the sacrilege (927) implies that the act of sacrilege, namely, the violation of the sanctuary has already been committed. In dramatic terms, the enactment of physical force upon the Danaids would function as a parallel scene to their earlier plea to Pelasgus not to let them be dragged away from the images of the gods (428-32): what was verbally expressed as a fearful prospect would now be enacted on stage, with Pelasgus securing the safety of the Danaids.

The herald and his Egyptian men leave the stage between 951-3: their departure while the audience hear the king's deprecating words serves to stress the overwhelming predominance of Pelasgus in the confrontation. His reassuring address to the maidens to take courage (955) is followed by a stage direction which mirrors that in the scene between Pelasgus and Danaus in the first episode: as Pelasgus had earlier given a number of his own guards to Danaus (500), so here the king urges the Danaids to go to the city accompanied by 'friendly escorts' (954).⁴⁵ The parallel between the two passages is meant to

accentuate the sense of the Argive protection offered to Danaus' family, evident in the Argive presence in the form of the mute extras on stage who are explicitly identified as friendly (954). In spatial terms it serves to highlight the gradual shift towards the city of Argos and the conflict with the Egyptians. Pelasgus leaves the stage at 974, following the Danaids' words of gratitude (964-74). He may leave soon before Danaus enters at 980, although the fact that no comment is made as to his exit either by himself or by the chorus is odd, given that usually characters' exits in Greek tragedy are clearly marked.⁴⁶ On the other hand, if he remained on stage till the end of the episode, his silent presence would have mirrored the long silence of Danaus during the exchange between the Danaids and Pelasgus (234-489) in the first episode, and the mention of Pelasgus' name at 1010 would equally mirror the single mention of Danaus' name at 321. Although Pelasgus' long silence may be considered embarrassing,⁴⁷ Danaus' instruction to his daughters to pray to the Argives as if they were gods (980-3) does honour to them as also do his words of thanks for the Argive assistance (989-90); hence Pelasgus may be assumed to be a suitable listener.

Danaus' bodyguards, probably represented by a supplementary chorus (985-6), are now meant to mirror on stage the group of armed attendants recently assigned by Pelasgus to be the Danaids' escorts to the city (954). Danaus' retinue of bodyguards at 985-6 recalls his earlier request for escorts at 492-3, which Pelasgus immediately granted (500). But his acquisition of guards after persuading the Argives that his life is in danger (983-8) now raises him to a more elevated status, and his presence on stage may here foreshadow his accession to kingship in the second play of the trilogy; this idea is enhanced by the fact that ever since Peisistratus had become a tyrant after receiving a bodyguard retinue on the fabricated grounds of a threat to his life (Herodotus 1.59.4-5), asking for a bodyguard was often followed by the acquisition of absolute power.⁴⁸ The Danaids' address to their handmaids to accompany them (977-9) may be a stage direction that the maids should now be positioned beside or behind their mistresses, and makes sense as the play now reaches the *exodos* and the audience are prepared to see the joint departure to the city of Argos. The silent presence of these maidservants is important, as they are said to have been allocated by Danaus to each of the Danaids by lot as dowry (978-9). This detail suggests that the prospect of the Danaids' marriage is not entirely excluded, either by themselves or by their father, and the reference here may be related to the theme of marriage in the course of the trilogy (see [Chapter 5](#)).⁴⁹

Danaus stays on stage throughout the *exodos* as he is meant to accompany his daughters to Argos. As at 234-489, his presence is

again silent as now the focus shifts to the chorus of Danaids, who sing in alternation with the subsidiary Argive chorus. The play ends with Danaus, his daughters, the group of the handmaids, as well as the group of Argive guards, who visibly guarantee civic protection, leaving for the city. The formation of the procession probably starts at 1018, with the Danaids' invitation to start singing.

Music, song and dance

Aeschylus composed the music and produced the choreography of his plays. The chorus were accompanied throughout the play by a musician who played the *aulos*, a double reed-pipe (similar to an oboe⁵⁰). The *aulos* was a polyphonic, hence flexible, instrument, which could not only accompany the sung parts of the tragedy but, as ancient sources mention, also reproduce a variety of sounds, including sounds of nature as well as mechanical noises.⁵¹ In this sense, even the noise made by the approaching Argive army (181) may have been reproduced by the *aulos*. Although the *aulos* was the standard musical instrument in tragedy, other string instruments such as the lyre were probably used.⁵² In the second *stasimon*, where the chorus pray to the gods to send all sorts of blessings to the Argives, the chorus' wish at 694-7 that songs of joy would be sung at the altars at the accompaniment of the *phorminx*, namely, a type of lyre or harp, as opposed to the lack of dance and music during wartime (681-2), might be a self-referential hint at the use of a similar music during the chorus' song.⁵³ This is supported by the use of the word *aoidoi* ('singers') at 695, which is used elsewhere in Greek tragedy to refer to the members of the chorus:⁵⁴ hence the chorus here may be momentarily adopting an external perspective to refer to what the audience witness, namely, their performance of a joyful song. The cheerful atmosphere also conveys strong dramatic irony: they thank the Argives by praying for peace and not war, yet the Argives' decision to offer asylum to the Danaids threatens them with war against the Egyptians.

During the *parodos*, the chorus draw attention to the fact that their grievous song is a lament (57-76) and more specifically a dirge (115-16). The change of rhythm here follows the gradual change of the metre which typifies laments, namely, the transition from the metrical variety of the first five pairs of strophes and antistrophes, that is, lyric parts corresponding to each other in metre and style (40-111), to the iambic rhythm of the remaining three pairs (112-75), a pattern which is emotionally heightened by the three doubled *ephumnia*, 'refrains' (117-22 = 128-33, 141-3 = 151-3, 162-6 = 175a-ef).⁵⁵ The chorus' reference to the 'Ionian strains' (69) reinforces

the dramatic context of mourning, as the Ionian mode was renowned for its plaintive and mournful character.⁵⁶ At the same time, this verbal description may be said to be a self-referential allusion to the vocal performance of the chorus' song in the Ionian scale in front of the audience. The Ionian mode was a certain musical scale to which instruments were tuned and was considered smooth and emotive.⁵⁷ In dramatic terms, apart from a suitable accompaniment for the song, the reference to the choice of a Greek tone in the chorus' introductory song has a strong dramatic effect, as it serves to accentuate the Greek origin of the Danaids, whose identity is both Greek and foreign.⁵⁸

The abundance of lyric parts in the play shows how song contributes to dramatic effect. The exchange between the chorus and Pelasgus is made in an epirrhematic (literally 'sung afterwards') composition, i.e. the alternation between choral song and an actor's spoken verses. Following the calm dialogue between Pelasgus and the chorus-leader (234-347), the change of rhythm in the ensuing lyric section (348-437) drastically changes the atmosphere, as the Danaid chorus now begin a series of emotional appeals. Here the lyric metres used,⁵⁹ predominantly dochmiacs (literally, 'going askew'), convey the Danaid's high agitation, whereas Pelasgus' use of spoken iambic verses conveys his rational deliberation, his dilemma. The effect of the chorus' bursting into song at a moment of increased urgency, when the previous calm exchange has failed, is to increase dramatic tension, as the Danaids try to influence Pelasgus emotionally. It is only when even this impassionate attempt fails that the chorus-leader reverts to spoken dialogue; however another emotional means is being used, namely, the threat of suicide, as a last resort to make Pelasgus succumb (455-89). A similar dramatic effect is achieved in the epirrhematic exchange between Danaus and his daughters at 734ff., where the fear of the Danaids at the impending arrival of the Egyptians is conveyed in the chorus' lyrics, mostly in dochmiacs, and contrasted with Danaus' reassuring response in spoken iambs. The lyric exchange between the Danaids and the chorus of the Egyptians at 825-71 must have also conveyed a sense of extreme agitation and tension.

Dochmiac metre generally conveys strong emotions, including grief, terror, excitement and sometimes joy.⁶⁰ The use of this metre during the second *stasimon* (625-709), an ode full of blessings for Argos, seems to aim at stressing the idea of joy. But the predominant association of fear and danger that the dochmiacs have in other parts of the drama, as in the exchanges of the chorus with Pelasgus (348-437) and Danaus (736-59), rather implies that their function throughout the second *stasimon* is to undermine the sense of optimism of this ode by raising an ominous note:⁶¹ instead of keeping the god of

war away, as the chorus pray, the danger of war is imminent, as the Egyptians are soon to arrive, and the Danaids, who now pray for blessings, are the ones who put Argos at the risk of war.

The contribution of metre to dramatic effect is suggested also in the *exodos*, which includes a lyric exchange between the chorus of the Danaids and that of the Argive guards. It is composed mostly in ionic metre, considered to be highly emotive. At the same time, the ionics usually carry non-Greek associations, as they are associated with both the exotic and the barbarian element. Aeschylus uses this metre in *Persians* as well as in the description of Helen's trip to Troy in *Agamemnon* (681-781). The use in *Suppliants* may at first seem odd, given that the *exodos* prepares for the move to Argos. But it may be meant to evoke the foreign identity of the Danaids, soon to be imported into a Greek city. As the ionics used for Helen in *Agamemnon* help portray her as a fury welcomed by the Trojans, so the exotic metre of the *exodos* may be suggestive of the danger of the Danaids' presence in Argos, which will be dramatized in the sequel plays. This notion is reinforced in the final strophic pair (1062-73), where the Danaids resume a metre, namely, the *lecythion*, previously used in their references to suicide (154-9, 796-8). Thus, the final words of the Danaids, uttered in a metre previously associated with death, may be said to increase suspense as to what is to follow in the second play and to prepare for the murder of the grooms as the result of the Danaids' unyielding attitude.⁶²

Finally, dance was an integral part of the performance. The term chorus itself refers to the activity of dancing. Dancing was mimetic and helped to represent emotion.⁶³ The chorus danced in a solemn manner, in circular or rectangular formation, whereas at times of intense emotion, as in the case of the *parodos* of *Suppliants*, their dancing could become irregular and turn into agitated movement. The choreography throughout the *parodos* must have represented the act of mourning, as the references to the beating of their heads and breasts (68-72) as well as to the tearing of their clothes (120-2 = 131-3) indicate, whereas during each appeal to the gods the chorus may have stretched up their hands above their heads. The choreography may have also vividly represented the threatening and steady approach of both the Egyptian chorus and the herald, especially when the Danaids' beast imagery, used to describe their enemies (887, 895), seems to replicate bodily advances on stage.

Reception

The text

Suppliants was included in the selection of seven Aeschylean tragedies made in late antiquity, but the reasons behind the choice are not certain. Although educational purposes, namely, the use of certain plays in the school curriculum, often seem like plausible reasons,¹ this is rather unlikely for *Suppliants*, and the inclusion of this play may be due to the fact that a scholar such as Didymus chose to write a commentary on it.² The text was transmitted in a single manuscript, the Mediceus Laurentianus 32.9 (M) (tenth century),³ and was also preserved in four direct or indirect copies of M from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁴ The indirect tradition in antiquity includes quotations from the play by authors such as Plutarch or Strabo,⁵ but the overall paucity of *testimonia* rather reveals a low popularity of the play among ancient readers. In the selection of three Aeschylean tragedies made in the Byzantine period⁶ *Suppliants* was not included.

It was probably due to the difficult Aeschylean diction that the *editio princeps* of Aeschylus postdates the Aldine editions of both Sophocles and Euripides. This appeared in 1518 and opened the way to the familiarization of the readers with the dramatist,⁷ also helped by the scholarly editions by A. Turnebus⁸ in 1552 (Paris) and by A. Robortellus the same year (Venice).⁹ It was around the same period, in 1555, that Aeschylus was translated into Latin by J. Sanravius, while no translation of Aeschylean plays in any vernacular language in Europe appeared before the seventeenth century.¹⁰ It was rather the development of classical scholarship from the nineteenth century onwards that triggered an interest in Aeschylean dramaturgy.¹¹ From the twentieth century onwards the popularity of Aeschylus has certainly increased, although, admittedly, it is the *Oresteia* that chiefly accounts for this recognition.

Ancient iconography

Vase-paintings often illuminate tragic performances, although it is usually difficult to determine whether certain illustrations depict theatrical productions or vaguely allude to them or to the myth

dramatized.¹² Even in cases where an illustration seems to be theatrical, the degree of faithful reproduction is imprecise, given that it is not photographic but relies on the painter's imagination and freedom in reshaping what he saw as a spectator. The only reliable proof of correspondence with theatre is the inclusion of a theatrical element such as the depiction of a mask or of a stage.

The pictorial record of the Danaids in antiquity, according to Keuls' concise categorization,¹³ consists in their portrayal as (a) suppliants, (b) murderers of the Aegyptiads, (c) water-carriers. The third category, which is by far the predominant association of the Danaids, appears in South Italian monuments of the fourth century¹⁴ and most frequently in the late Greek and Roman period, where pouring water into a leaking vessel was associated with punishment or purification. The frequent depictions on vases and reliefs in South Italy, especially in Apulia, show that these associations merged with that of salvation:¹⁵ the South Italian mystic religion, influenced by Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines, must have facilitated the reading of the Danaid trilogy, if this introduced the idea of the ordeal of the Danaids as a purification symbolic of redemption, as carrying an inherent message of salvation (see [Chapter 3](#)). As for the second category, among the few portrayals of the Danaids as murderers, there is an Apulian krater from the second quarter of the fourth century BC depicting women equipped with swords as they encircle men lying on beds.¹⁶

As the presentation of the Danaids as suppliants seems to be an Aeschylean innovation, (see [Chapter 3](#)), the first category may be closely related to the Aeschylean play. A popular theme in the relevant iconography is that of the landing of the Danaids at Argos along with their father and their subsequent supplication. The earliest instances are two Attic *hydriai* (water-jars) (460-50 BC), one (Munich 2429) depicting a female figure approaching a king while other women unload offerings, and the other (Berlin 30928) showing a male character and six female figures landing on a rocky shore, some of them carrying objects.¹⁷ On the first of these two illustrations, the Danaid at the centre carries a bough, resembling a palm leaf, in her left hand and a bowl (*phialê*) in her right hand. Two Danaids on the left help each other in passing gifts, while at the centre of the picture there is a pile probably consisting of gifts for the host. Pelasgus, holding a staff in his right hand and gesturing in a rather welcoming manner with his left hand, is seated on a rock. Behind him stands one Danaid watching and another is positioned in front of him holding a fan (*rhipis*) as a gift. The Danaids wear long robes but no headdresses, while their foreignness may be implied in the presence of the palm-leaf. Although Pelasgus appears only later in the Aeschylean play, his

presence in the artistic representation may be intended to identify the persons on the scene as well as to signal that the supplication proper is soon to start.

In the second illustration, the boat signals the sea-journey, while the Danaids' backward gaze towards their father, who has not disembarked yet, serves as a visual allusion to the Danaids' constant reliance on Danaus for guidance, a recurrent feature of the Aeschylean version. Apart from wearing long robes, the Danaids characteristically wear headdresses, as in the Aeschylean play, which allude to their foreign status. The sash that Danaus is handing to his daughter may recall their threat to use their girdles to commit suicide in the play (463). They carry gifts but no suppliant branches: this agrees with the reference in the play that the boughs were newly-cut (334) and suggests that the Danaids cut them upon arriving at the sacred grove. As in other literary versions of the myth that Danaus invaded Argos (see [Chapter 3](#)), both these Attic depictions mark a shift in portraying Danaus as a well-disposed, gift-bearing man who has come to seek help for his family,¹⁸ and their date, close to that of the Aeschylean production, suggests that they probably evoke the Aeschylean version.

The Danaids as suppliants also feature in four Apulian vases of the late fourth century.¹⁹ What is important is that all four illustrations focus on two themes which are fundamental in Aeschylus: (a) supplication, and (b) Pelasgus' help against the Egyptian threat. Thus on a volute krater (c. 320 BC) (Brussels: Errera collection),²⁰ two Danaids sit as suppliants on an altar. Several suppliant branches are placed around them. On the right stands Pelasgus, holding a sword in his right hand and his royal sceptre in his left hand. On the other side stands a man dressed in traveller's attire and holding a sword in his right hand. He is portrayed as close to dragging one of the maidens, since his left hand is extended towards her, but the maiden is not presented as scared; her fearless expression is probably meant to stress her confidence in her status as a suppliant and in the power of Pelasgus.

Amymone is shown on several Attic vases from c. 460 BC, as pursued by Poseidon or the satyrs, and these scenes may well have been inspired by Aeschylus' accompanying satyr-drama by the same name (see [Chapter 2](#)). The sudden increase of pictorial representations of this theme in the 440s may be attributed either to the production of a new satyr-play *Amymone* by a later poet during that period or to a new production of the Aeschylean play in the context of the posthumous stagings of Aeschylean dramas. In the latter case, this would testify to the popularity of the Aeschylean tetralogy.²¹ The theme continues to be depicted on later Attic as well as South Italian vases, where Amymone is often portrayed along with Poseidon, while

the occasional presence of the satyrs recalls the origin of the theme in satyr drama.

The ancient Greek literary record

Two tragedies by Timæstheus entitled *Danaids* (TrGF 214 fr. 1) are recorded by Suda (s.v. 'Timêstheos'), but we know nothing more about their date or their content. The same title is recorded for a comedy by Aristophanes (fr. 256-76 PCG) and another one by Diphilus (fr. 24 PCG), while Nicochares, a contemporary of Aristophanes, wrote a comic drama entitled *Amymone* (fr. 40-41 PCG). In the fragmentary *Runaway Women*, in which there is an encounter between a female chorus and Theseus, the ruler of Athens, Cratinus, an older rival of Aristophanes, parodied the suppliant-type tragedies using Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, among other plays, as a subtext.²² The parody of the supplication-motif probably aimed at mocking the 'patriotic' self-praise of Athens, which substituted the image of an altruistic city for that of an imperialistic power.²³

Theodectas, a friend of Aristotle, composed a tragedy entitled *Lynceus* (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452a26-8 = TrGF 72 fr. 3a). Aristotle mentions *Lynceus* as an example of the reversal of situation in tragedy, since, although Danaus intends to execute Lynceus, in the end it is Lynceus who murders him. The fact that in his first reference to *Lynceus* Aristotle does not mention the name of its author seems to imply that Theodectas' play was particularly famous.²⁴ This play is probably illustrated on a vase-painting (375-50 BC), which represents the murder of a man (probably Danaus), dressed in stage attire to indicate that the scene is derived from a drama, by a youth with negroid characteristics (probably Lynceus).²⁵

Three Euripidean plays refer to the Danaids' murder of their husbands as a well-known mythic example indicating the danger inherent in extreme forms of female empowerment directed against men. The familiarity of this myth probably owed much to the Aeschylean treatment of it a few decades earlier. First, in *Hecuba* 885-7, Agamemnon's scorn of the women's strength is assertively answered by Hecuba's reference to the murders carried out by the Danaids and by the women of the island of Lemnos.²⁶ The use of the two *exempla*, which involve collective murders of men by women using guile, is dramatically effective, as it is made by Hecuba when she is thinking of the throng of Trojan women in the tent (880), who, as her plan is put into action, will eventually deceive Polymestor, her enemy, and inflict a bloody punishment upon him and his children. Secondly, in *Heracles* 1016-17, the Danaids' deed is mentioned by the

chorus as an old crime, now surpassed in notoriety by Heracles' infanticide. It is said to have been both renowned in the past and also to have been met with disbelief in Greece. This description serves to accentuate its notoriety, while the mention of Greece implies that its extreme violence was perceived as typically foreign to Greek standards; this recalls the interplay between the Greek and the barbarian origin of the Danaids in Aeschylus' play and trilogy (cf. Medea's crime and the stress on her barbarian origin in Euripides' *Medea*). Thirdly, during the confrontation between Creon and Antigone in *Phoenician Women* Antigone refuses to proceed with her marriage to Haemon (both a cousin and a fiancé), threatening that her wedding night will turn her into a Danaid (1675). Antigone here wishes to escape marriage, which she now considers inappropriate, out of piety for her father (1679), as she is determined to follow Oedipus into exile. Her unyielding resolution as well as her opting for the role of a daughter over that of a bride make her imagined identification as a Danaid-to-be particularly effective.

The long scene between Io and Prometheus in [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound* (561-886), a play considered spurious by many critics (see [Chapter 1](#)), shows in many respects a familiarity with Aeschylus' *Suppliants*.²⁷ By bringing Io on stage, the play enlivens the Io-myth, which is only narrated in *Suppliants*, and portrays both Io's sufferings and her future deliverance in Egypt (846-52). Apart from certain differences, which may be owed to the different dramatic situations of the two plays, there are strong similarities: Prometheus foretells (853ff.) that fifty female descendants of Io will return to Argos in order to escape marriage with their cousins. The focus on the Danaids and the complete absence of any reference to their father may recall the secondary role of Danaus in *Suppliants*. The Danaids' motivation is again not entirely clarified, but there is a stress on the idea of kinship between the Danaids and the Aegyptiads (855-6), which here too may suggest the idea of incest or simply heighten the notion of outrage as the result of violence between kin. The image that Prometheus uses, of doves pursued by hawks, is strongly reminiscent of the same bird-imagery in *Suppliants* (223-4). The reference to *himeros*, '(love's) desire'²⁸ (865) as motivating Hypermestra to spare Lynceus, may be related to the Aeschylean Danaid trilogy, especially if one considers the role of Aphrodite there. The word *himeros* is also used by Danaus in *Suppliants* (1005) for the male desire excited at the sight of maidens, in a context which stresses the universal power of Aphrodite in nature, foreshadowing her role in the rest of the trilogy. Finally, the stress on Hypermestra's inner conflict between two evils, namely, incurring the charge of cowardice or impious murder, and her final decision to opt for the former

(867-8), have been exploited in the Danaid trilogy by Aeschylus.²⁹

Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, the oldest extant supplication-tragedy, includes a number of patterns which recur in plays such as Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Children of Heracles* and *Suppliants*.³⁰ The Aeschylean Pelasgus, in particular, as a 'proto-democratic' king, functions as the prototype for the presentations of Theseus as the 'democratic' king *par excellence* in Greek tragedy both in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and in Euripides' *Suppliants* as well as of his son, Demophon, in the Euripidean *Children of Heracles*. Accordingly, the Aeschylean Argos becomes the prototype for the patriotic glorification of Athens as the city prepared to uphold justice and support the helpless, regardless of the risks involved. This theme is unveiled in the confrontation-scenes of the Euripidean plays, i.e. between the king (Demophon; Theseus) and a herald (the Argive envoy sent by Eurystheus; the Theban herald sent by Creon), which bring to the fore the contrast between a democratic and a tyrannical regime (see [Chapter 6](#)). This strongly recalls the Aeschylean confrontation between Pelasgus and the Egyptian envoy as the remote subtext. In the case of *Children of Heracles*, in particular, apart from the overall similarities in terms of plot structure and content, there is evidence to suggest that the Aeschylean play may be the model: the abusive herald, who treats Iolaus and Heracles' children as the property of Eurystheus (67-8, 267) and does not hesitate to drag the old man from the altar and knock him on the ground, is strongly reminiscent of the physical violence of the Egyptian herald and his treatment of the Danaids as the property of the Aegyptiads that he has come to reclaim (918). Euripides here also seems to be ironically reversing a detail from the Aeschylean play to accentuate the dramatic impact: whereas Pelasgus identified the Danaids' foreignness by their costume (234-7), Demophon recognizes the herald as Greek by his garment, juxtaposing his Greekness to the barbarian nature of his insolent behaviour (130-1).³¹

The Aeschylean play seems to have left its mark during the Hellenistic period as well: the *Exagôgê* (Exodus), a tragedy composed by the Jewish dramatist Ezekiel between the second and first centuries BC and preserved in fragments, recasts the Biblical theme of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, in tragic form. Ezekiel, a poet whose work strongly echoes Greek tragedy (especially Euripides), here evokes a parallel between Greek and Jewish history:³² as in the case of Danaus and his daughters, his play, which also includes a group of sisters, dramatizes the persecution, escape from Egypt and eventual return of the people of Israel to their own country. The parallel, which stresses the affinities between Greeks and Jews, may be said to contribute to the

favourable reception of the people of Israel by the Greek audience.

The Roman literary record

The earliest notable Latin treatment of the Danaid myth is made by Horace in his *Odes* 3.11 (23 BC). This ode³³ is a love-poem addressed to a hetaera named Lyde and uses Hypermestra as an example of laudable femininity (25-52). The fact that the Danaid remains unnamed is perhaps owed to the fact that the name Hypermestra is so famous that it needs no reference. Although used as a mythic example, the story of Hypermestra receives such an emphatic treatment that it practically replaces Lyde as the central focus of the poem.

According to Horace, the maidens had taken an oath in the presence of their father that they would murder their grooms, but Hypermestra broke this oath (33-4). Horace uses an effective oxymoron to characterize Hypermestra's violation of her oath: she is *splendide mendax* (35), 'nobly cheating'. A distinctive feature of the Hypermestra-part is that it employs dramatic form (36ff.), as the maiden addresses her newly-wed husband, urging him to flee and escape death. The dramatic form used and the overall elevated and noble sentiment, with the maiden's expressed self-abnegation, which makes compassion take priority over her knowledge of her imminent punishment by her father (45-6), recall aspects of some tragic treatment of the theme, and it is tempting to assume that the Aeschylean dramatization in the course of the Danaid trilogy may have left a lasting impact on subsequent treatments. If the Aeschylean trilogy developed the idea of Hypermestra's compassion, this would symmetrically match the compassion felt by the Argives for the helpless refugees in the first play and would contrast the violence exhibited by both the Aegyptiads and the murderous Danaids in the course of the trilogy.³⁴ Such a treatment certainly seems suitable for tragedy and may have featured in Aeschylus. At all events, the notion of mercy felt for someone who is defenceless may have seemed attractive to Horace, who gives it a Romanized treatment, since the main motif of Hypermestra's story is not love but virtue: the mercy felt by his Hypermestra is *clementia* (cf. *clemens*, 'compassionate', 46), a highly valued virtue in Rome. As a personification of clemency or mercy, it was deified and in 44 BC a temple was consecrated by the Roman senate jointly to *clementia* and Julius Caesar, as a commemoration of the mercy shown by Caesar to his enemies.

At the same time, the emphasis on the Danaid myth in the ode may be read as obliquely political, namely, as a literary tribute³⁵ to the establishment by Augustus, in 28 BC, three years after his great victory

at Actium, of the majestic temple of Apollo,³⁶ whose portico was adorned with statues of the Danaids and their father. The institution of this imposing monument on the Palatine hill, which probably made it visible from all over Rome, had immense political significance, as it was symbolic of the inauguration of the new Augustan regime. The sculptural subject seems to have reflected contemporary associations, as the sons of Aegyptus and their overall Egyptian background would have been evocative of Cleopatra of Egypt and Antony, Augustus' opponent at Actium. In this respect, the myth of the Danaids' murders of their Egyptian cousins would have stood for the victory of Rome over Egypt.³⁷ The symbolism of the Danaids' presence in the statuary could also have been reminiscent of the horrific evils of civil war.³⁸ The strife between Augustus and Antony was a war between a Roman and one who was disowned as such through his connection with Cleopatra, but it was ultimately a civil war for Rome.³⁹

Alternatively, the Danaids might have been meant to parallel not the Romans but Cleopatra.⁴⁰ On this view the Danaid statues were probably spoils taken from conquered cities during the war against Antony and Cleopatra, in which case they were meant to be perceived as representations of the enemies of Rome and as trophies of Roman triumph over the barbaric East. The Danaid sculptures on the Palatine are given several references by contemporary poets: Propertius pays a tribute to the building of the portico in one of his elegies (2.31), where he singles out the statues of the Danaids with their shining effect in the portico. Ovid too refers to 'the portico which displays the line of the Danaids' (*Amores* 2.2.4) and in *Tristia* (3.1.60-2) he refers to the 'sublime, shining temple of unshorn Apollo, where statues alternate with exotic pillars, the descendants of Belus (sc. The Danaids, Belus' granddaughters), and their barbarian father with dragged sword'. Ovid's reference to Danaus as barbarian recalls his description as 'savage' in his *Ars Amatoria* 1.74, a poem which condemns the Danaids as 'daring' and shows that his sympathies lie with the 'poor' husbands (73-4). All this suggests that the poets viewed the use of the Danaid theme with regard to contemporary politics as ambiguous.⁴¹

Vergil's *Aeneid*, published after his death in 19 BC, marks a remarkable shift in the standard tendency of Latin literature to focus on the Danaids' Underworld punishment, as they are absent from the Sibyl's description of the notorious sinners in the Underworld in the sixth book. This striking omission is owed to a symbolic role, other than that of sin and repentance, that Vergil reserves for Danaus' daughters in his epic.⁴² The myth of the Danaids' crime is treated in the last and briefest of the descriptions of artifacts in Vergil's *Aeneid*. In the twelfth book (938-47), Aeneas slays Turnus in a state of frenzy,

provoked by the sight of an object, namely, the sword-belt (*balteus*) that Turnus had snatched as a spoil from the dead body of Pallas, Evander's son, an act described in the tenth book (495-9). The reference to the slaughter of the band of (unnamed) youths in the bloody wedding-chambers (10.498) is an unmistakable allusion to the massive slaughter of the newly-wed sons of Aegyptus by the Danaids, and its inclusion in the narrative invites a consideration of the symbolic overtones and their relation to the epic characters.⁴³ As the emphasis is on the victims slaughtered, the picture ironically foreshadows the imminent death of Turnus, himself a bridegroom-to-be. But, apart from the intratextual connections, what seems to be the most important connotation is again related to a contemporary resonance: as the splendid Palatine temple was a suitably lavish monument for the Augustan era, so it may have been reflected in Vergil's *Aeneid*, an epic also meant to glorify Augustan achievement.⁴⁴ In the twelfth book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas' infuriated killing of Turnus parallels the Danaids' murders of their Egyptian grooms as well as Augustus' victory over Antony and Egypt.⁴⁵

But the Vergilian treatment shows both the heroism of Aeneas as well as his lack of the Roman virtue of *clementia*, in the sense that his rage proves to be stronger than the ethical demand for clemency, especially when it follows Turnus' begging for his life.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Vergil explicitly condemns the Danaids' deed, using the word *nefas* ('abomination') for it. Thus the parallelism of Aeneas with the Danaids may be positive, but it also reveals problematic ramifications, in the same way as Augustus' victory over the Egyptian queen Cleopatra was also a victory of a Roman over another Roman (Antony). Similarly in the Danaid model, the Danaids, starting from the Aeschylean play, attempted to establish themselves as ethnically distinct from the Aegyptiads, yet both sides ultimately shared a common origin. This is also evident in the description of the Danaid crime on Pallas' baldric, where the stress is on the slaughtered victims as a result of a foul crime (10.498): the implication is that the Danaids were merciless, as their victims were unprepared, and also transgressive, since they used intra-familial violence directed against a husband and a cousin.⁴⁷ At the same time, the Vergilian sympathy for the Danaids' victims may aim not so much at implying the transgression of Aeneas, as at portraying war from the perspective of the victims. In this respect, the Vergilian use of the Danaid myth displays an awareness of the tragic dimension of war, where victors become victims, as Turnus defeated Pallas only to be killed by Aeneas. The Vergilian treatment is thus different from the triumphalist self-assertion of the Augustan propaganda as displayed in the Palatine portico.

Ovid's *Heroides* is a fine example of the epistolary type of

narration, exploring female psychology, and the desire for union with the beloved, by giving voice to heroines who become fictional writers using first-person narrative. The fourteenth letter is composed by Hypermestra, who is presented in a state of shock after the previous night, and is addressed to Lynceus,⁴⁸ whom she calls on to rescue her, as becomes evident at the end of the letter. The greatest part of this dramatic monologue is a narration of past events which are not known to Lynceus but help to explain Hypermestra's deeds. In many respects, this letter seems to be an elaborate response to the dramatic treatment of Hypermestra in Horace (*Odes* 3.11). Horace made his Hypermestra express the fear that her father will cast her in chains (45); Ovid has her write the letter at a time when she is in fact imprisoned and kept in fetters by her father as a punishment for her disobedience. It is the chains that Ovid stresses both at the beginning (3) and at the end, making his heroine end her letter as her hands are said to be left without strength under their weight (131-2). Her pleas to Lynceus to flee and their ensuing short exchange (73-8) are also reminiscent of the similar scene in Horace (37-52). In Horace, Hypermestra asks Lynceus to engrave a lament on her sepulchre (51-2), as she believes that she will be put to death; this is recalled when the Ovidian heroine asks Lynceus either to rescue her or, if she dies, to bury her bones and carve a few words giving piety as the reason for her death (127-30). The Ovidian version also fully develops the magnanimity and self-abnegation that characterize her counterpart in Horace, and both the first-person narrative and the length of the poem help to bring out the nobility of the heroine and her emotional turmoil as she is constantly torn between obeying her father and refraining from committing murder (37-66). However, the Ovidian emphasis on her agonizing deliberation and conflicting emotions, which culminates in the monologue-section (53-66) of her speech of deliberation, is strongly reminiscent of scenes of inner conflict in tragedy (cf. the Euripidean Medea's monologues).⁴⁹ Since Ovid was familiar with Greek tragedy, it is tempting to assume that this idea may have originated in Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy.⁵⁰ The same might apply to Hypermestra's description (79-80) of the coming of Danaus the following morning to see the results and his reaction at finding out that she had disobeyed him, if such a scene had been dramatized by Aeschylus.⁵¹

Another part that may have actually been derived from the Aeschylean trilogy is the reference to the festive atmosphere of the wedding ritual in Pelasgus' palace (23), with the wedding-songs performed for the bridal pair and the revel that followed (21-31).⁵² The reference to Pelasgus' palace recalls the Aeschylean version, though the presence of Aegyptus seems to depart from it, hence Ovid here rather seeks variation. The long digression on Io (85-108) which

Hypermestra uses as a parallel to her case also recalls the parallel between Io and the Danaids in Aeschylus, where only Hypermestra in the end proved to have followed her ancestress's example.

Hypermestra's decisive motivation in sparing Lynceus is not love, as for other heroines of Ovid's work, but the joint operation of fear and piety (*timor et pietas*, 49, also implied in 4-5). The fear here seems to be related to her instinctive dread of committing a crime that would cause divine wrath.⁵³ It was this fear that caused her blood to grow still and her body to tremble when she heard the moans of the other grooms as they were being slaughtered (35-41). It was this fear that was overcome only when she remembered her father's order (43). The combination of reverence and fear as crucial factors which deter people from doing wrong is proclaimed by the Aeschylean Athena in her ordinance in *Eumenides* (690-1) and may have played some role at the end of the Danaid trilogy, perhaps in relation to Aphrodite.⁵⁴ Although, of course, this remains a matter of conjecture, it is tempting to assume that Ovid may have developed a motivation in his heroine which had already appeared in Aeschylus.

Finally, the very essence of Hypermestra's dilemma, namely, her fluctuation between devotion to her father and loyalty to her husband, may have been treated in the Danaid trilogy, especially if Danaus used the notion of filial loyalty in order to persuade his daughters to pursue the murders.⁵⁵ The choice of this theme for treatment may also have been influenced by contemporary tastes, as it must have been particularly appealing to Roman audiences used to *controversiae* – rhetorical exercises arguing for and against conflicting alternatives.⁵⁶

Modern times

Suppliants has not been very popular on stage, perhaps owing to the great proportion of lines allocated to the chorus and to the incomplete nature of the story. But it has provoked a number of adaptations in tragedy, comedy, and parody, while its myth has inspired productions in ballets, operas and radio. The great majority of modern adaptations focus on Hypermestra's conflicts of loyalty towards her father and her husband, which may have ultimately derived from the Aeschylean trilogy, often with an emphasis on the romantic love between Hypermestra and Lynceus and on the portrayal of Danaus in entirely negative terms. What follows is a discussion of certain representative works from the eighteenth to the end of the twentieth century, in which the Aeschylean treatment of the Danaid myth in his trilogy seems to be reflected in varying degrees.

Among the many operas composed on the Danaid myth with an

emphasis on Hypermestra between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (see Appendix), a famous example is Antonio Salieri's *Les Danaïdes*, performed in 1784.⁵⁷ The librettos were written by F.L. du Roullet and L.T. de Tschudy. Following Aegyptus' death, Danaus himself suggests to his nephews that they should marry his daughters as a means of reconciling the two families. The opening atmosphere is joyful, filled with promises of peace and marriage, while Hypermestra and Lynceus confess their mutual love. The chorus' songs to Hymen (the god of marriage), which recall the Aeschylean trilogy, prepare for the wedding ceremonies. But the optimistic atmosphere is reversed as Danaus' plan is to annihilate his nephews. In an underground room of the palace, dedicated to Nemesis, the goddess of revenge, he orders his daughters to kill their grooms. Revenge permeates the entire scene, as Danaus reminds his daughters that he was dethroned by his brother and was sent on endless wanderings with them. Whereas her sisters comply and take an oath to kill their grooms, Hypermestra does not participate but keeps silent. She refrains from committing an outrageous crime despite the fact that, as Danaus angrily reminds her, an oracle looms over him, threatening that he will be murdered by one of his brother's sons.

Her monologue, which is reminiscent of a tragic monologue, reveals all her emotional turmoil, as her anguished soul is torn by the dilemma between filial devotion and her love for Lynceus, until she decides to spare her groom. In a scene which may also have been dramatized in the Aeschylean trilogy, Danaus rushes into her room and, failing to see Lynceus' corpse, he angrily orders his followers to restrain her and threatens to have her executed. The Danaids, presented in a state of Bacchic⁵⁸ frenzy as they go to hunt down Lynceus, are eventually killed by Lynceus. As Danaus orders one of his guards to kill Hypermestra, he is informed that his subjects have rebelled and sided with Lynceus. This agrees with Danaus' portrayal as a tyrant. When Danaus draws his own sword to kill his daughter, he is murdered by Pelagus (Pelasgus), the character who helped Lynceus escape. His name recalls the Aeschylean 'democratic' king, and the association is strengthened when he exclaims 'the tyrant is no more'. The final change of the setting to depict the Underworld punishment has a strong Aeschylean atmosphere, as Danaus is portrayed like Prometheus, chained to a rock and having his entrails devoured by a vulture.

Andreas Kalvos' (Andrea Calbo) *Le Danaïdi*, a tragedy in five acts divided by choral odes, published in London in 1818, gives a similar portrayal of Hypermestra's dilemma and her romantic love, as well as of her father as an embodiment of cruelty and tyranny:⁵⁹ Hypermestra is a noble character, with divided loyalties between father and spouse,

whereas Danaus is presented as blind with hatred and as exclusively clinging to the possession of royal power ('even from the grave', 444-5). Although the extent of Kalvos' familiarity with the ancient Greek authors is a debatable issue,⁶⁰ his interest in ancient myths certainly owes much to the influence of neoclassicism in Italy. The Italian poet Ugo Foscolo, who dramatized ancient myths in his tragedies, introduced Kalvos not only to neoclassicism but also to political liberalism.

The specific attraction of the Danaid myth for Kalvos may lie in the anti-tyrannical atmosphere of the early nineteenth century, as also expressed in the works of Vittorio Alfieri, a dramatist who influenced Kalvos.⁶¹ Kalvos' tragedy has a strong anti-tyrannical character as shown in the portrayal of the Danaids' father. Danaus, who has found refuge in Argos and has been defeated by his fifty nephews, is forced to marry off his fifty daughters to them. But in a state of madness in which he thinks he is being attacked by the Furies, Danaus changes his mind. Not only does he feel hatred for his brother but he also fears an oracle predicting that one of his sons-in-law will deprive him of his 'royal sceptre, life and fame' (503-4). In reality his nephews have no such intention but merely wish to depart with their brides.

Hypermestra is torn between her love for her father and her love for Lynceus and hesitates to leave. The deluded Danaus, in a dramatically effective monologue (613-81) which recalls the deluded Orestes in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, feels that he is persecuted by the terrifying Furies, who order him to prevent his nephews' departure. In his encounter with Hypermestra, Danaus stresses the issue of filial obedience and asks his daughter whom she loves more, her father or her spouse (1056-8). Her sisters are willing to obey him but Hypermestra eventually disobeys out of love for her husband. At the end of the drama, when he realizes that his daughter has betrayed him, his rage is such that he rushes against her, intending to kill her with his sword, but as the curtain falls Lynceus thwarts him, leaving the audience to imagine that Danaus' death will follow.

In modern Greece⁶² Aeschylus' *Suppliants* was first performed in 1930,⁶³ as part of the second Delphic celebrations organized by the poet Angelos Sikelianos and his American wife Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, who directed the play herself, as she did *Prometheus Bound* during the first Delphic Festival in 1927. As Angelos Sikelianos explained,⁶⁴ the focus of the play on the cultures of both Greece and Egypt made it a suitable choice for the occasion, since the primary aim of the Delphic festival was to contribute to the peaceful collaboration of all peoples around the world through art. For Eva Sikelianos, the play was all the more appealing, as it was then considered the oldest extant play and the chorus had the predominant role. This element took priority in her

mind over the numerous objections others made to the choice of this play for being allegedly the least dramatic tragedy.⁶⁵ Eva Sikelianos had been influenced by Nietzsche's view of tragedy (*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, 1872), which called for a restoration of the tragic chorus.⁶⁶ Indeed, the revival of the chorus was the most important element in both theatrical productions at Delphi.⁶⁷ The setting for *Suppliants* was minimal and consisted of a simple altar at the rear of the *orchêstra*, two statues and an 'archaic' seat. The natural circularity of the *orchêstra* in the ancient theatre of Delphi was symbolically effective in representing the 'Delphic idea', which, influenced by B. Pascal's famous idea of the world as an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, envisaged numerous circles with centres spread all around the world, representing each nation's highest artistic creations, starting from Delphi.⁶⁸

In her autobiography, Eva Sikelianos gives a detailed account of the second Delphic Festival and of all the preparations until the actual performance of *Suppliants*.⁶⁹ The chorus consisted of fifty Danaids, arranged in five groups, and was supplemented by twenty-five maidservants. Despite the large size of the chorus, it seems that the choreography was successful in managing to co-ordinate a large number of movements in harmony. The maidservants, dressed in white garments and differentiated from the Danaids by their yellow necklaces, sat in two semi-circular formations near the spectators throughout the performance. The Danaids were dressed in white costumes, which created a contrast to their darkened complexion, and their long dark hair was arranged according to ancient representations of Egyptian women. An innovation not suggested by the Aeschylean text was that Danaus had four mute followers with Egyptian-style garments, carrying Egyptian insignia and wearing animal-masks. The chorus entered carrying olive branches as symbols of their supplication and their entry was praised by contemporary critics.

Overall, there was a conscious attempt to combine the archaic with the modern. The translation by I. Gryparis was a lively version of the demotic language of modern Greece. On the other hand, the choreography was largely based on an attempt to reproduce dance movements as depicted in ancient vase-paintings. Both the costumes and the music revealed an interest in the continuity of Greek culture: the costumes of the chorus, which followed Egyptian patterns, were all woven on traditional looms.⁷⁰ Eva Sikelianos had herself been taught weaving, an ancient art that continued to be practised in modern Greek villages. The music made use of Byzantine patterns and was composed by K. Psahos, from whom Eva Sikelianos had herself taken lessons in Byzantine music, which she believed to be the

continuation of ancient Greek music.⁷¹ The stress was on the words and on their power to determine the rhythm in both music and dance, while Eva Sikelianos was reluctant to use rich orchestral accompaniment, in accordance with the notion that the ancient Greek performance was accompanied only by the music of a flute.⁷²

In her interest in the tragic chorus as well as in the art of weaving and the traditional music Eva Sikelianos was influenced by Penelope Duncan, sister of Angelos Sikelianos, and her husband Raymond.⁷³ The interest displayed at that time by non-Greeks in modern Greek tradition as the continuation of the ancient civilization reflects a neo-Romantic influence, which favoured folk traditions and vernacular language.⁷⁴ Isadora Duncan, the famous American dancer, was another enthusiast; she took an interest in ancient Greek chorus and music as a valuable source for the revival of dance art.⁷⁵ In 1903 she gave a choral performance of the third *stasimon* of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* at the Royal Theatre of Athens, dancing to the accompaniment of a choir chanting Byzantine rhythms. She also went on to give performances in Central Europe.⁷⁶ Eva Sikelianos' interest focused on modern Greek dances (as a continuation of ancient Greek dance) but mostly on a study of ancient representations of Greek dance movements.⁷⁷ The profile-chest position, which at first seems like a naive and meaningless copy from ancient vase-paintings, is rather an indication of the circular formation of the chorus.⁷⁸ Although some of the component elements of the Delphic performance had earlier been used separately, the productions of *Prometheus Bound* and *Suppliants* were unique in combining them on a single occasion: a tragic chorus, dressed in traditional costumes, dancing on patterns derived from modern practice as well as from ancient depictions, and traditional music following Byzantine models.⁷⁹

There were two performances of the play in two days: the first staging was addressed to invited Greek and foreign spectators and the second was open to the public, largely consisting of uneducated people from the surrounding area. Some of the public's spontaneous comments heard during the production and recorded in the press are telling as to the audience's response to the play:⁸⁰ one female spectator expressed her contempt at the 'dirty nigger' who dared to claim 'our girls', while several spectators justified the Danaids' hostility to marriage on the basis of their own belief that marriage between first cousins was forbidden. Overall, the staging of *Suppliants* at Delphi was in general favourably reviewed, especially in its treatment of the chorus, and seems to have influenced a stage production of the same play by the Cambridge Festival Theatre of Terence Gray in 1933.⁸¹

In 1995 the Romanian director Silviu Purcarete adapted Aeschylus'

tetralogy for the stage,⁸² and his *Danaïdes*, first staged in Craiova, Romania, the same year, toured Europe and the USA during 1996 and 1997. Adapted and performed during the politically troubled period for the former Yugoslavia, where the Islamic and the Christian worlds were divided by war, the Aeschylean play seemed all the more appealing to Purcarete as a play about war, exile, national and cultural differences, as well as the fear of 'difference'. The adaptation, based on *Suppliants* and what is known about the two other tragedies and the satyr-play, also uses basic ideas from other Aeschylean plays as well as from works such as Aristotle's *Poetics*, and reworks all this material using a high degree of imagination. The production puts emphasis on the visual impact, with the presence of fifty Danaids and fifty Egyptians on stage, as well as on the play between light and darkness during the murder-scene.

Whereas Aeschylus' *Suppliants* portrays the divine presence in the sacredness of the sanctuary and in the statues of the gods, Purcarete brings six gods on stage, visible only to the spectators, and makes them frame the action, which takes place on an isolated sea-shore near Argos, by explicitly commenting on what they witness. They are dressed in white costumes and seated on illuminated tables on either side of the stage sipping nectar. Zeus plays with dominoes, suggesting that he determines the moves of the characters on stage, as will be recalled at the end of the play. The gods stress the inevitability of fate and the sad lot of humanity, while their dialogue centres on a discussion of the function of tragedy, largely derived from Aristotle's discussion of pity and catharsis. Fifty young maidens arrive, dressed in deep blue clothes and carrying white suitcases. Their costumes, which resembled Islamic outfits, were probably intended to evoke contemporary parallels from the recent war in the former Yugoslavia and the state of the Islamic refugees. From a large suitcase a hand could be seen hanging out and when the suitcase was opened, it revealed Danaus, the maidens' father. His originally hidden presence is the first evidence of the secondary role he plays in comparison with his daughters. This is revealed to the spectators more emphatically when his figure fully emerges: he is an androgynous creature, played by a bare-breasted actress with a shaven head and a long goatee attached to her chin.

The second scene uses in a compressed form elements present in the Aeschylean play, including the supplication motif, Danaus' exhortations to his daughters to cling to modesty, and the maidens' aversion to marriage with their cousins, which here they explicitly regard as incestuous. The bird-imagery, which is prominent in the Aeschylean play, is also employed here: Danaus speaks of doves pursued by hawks, referring to his daughters' being pursued by their

cousins, now turned into enemies. The comments from the gods are also telling: Danaus' bird-imagery is immediately followed by a remark by Artemis, who uses another bird-image employed by the Aeschylean Danaus: 'how can a bird that eats the flesh of another remain pure?' This constitutes a divine recognition of the incestuous nature of the marriage, and the chorus-leader will use the same imagery at the end of the scene. Danaus sees a trident, as the Aeschylean Danaids did, and perceives it as the symbol of Poseidon. The Argive king, Pelasgus, is crippled and his hobbling about on crutches seems to make an ironic contrast with his stress on his power.

The third scene is strongly reminiscent of Aeschylus. It includes Danaus' advice to his daughters on how to behave in front of the Argive king, Pelasgus' comment on the non-Greek clothes of the maidens, the reference to Io as the distant Argive ancestress of the Danaids, the king's dilemma, and his stress on the need to consult with the Argive assembly. An important diversion is created by the comments made by both Hera and Zeus, who criticize the Danaids' aversion to marriage as madness and foretell that the maidens shall fall victims to their own folly. The next scene is a portrayal of the Io-myth, which has similarities with the portrayal of Io in *Prometheus Bound*, in the form of a dream seen by the maidens, who witness their ancestress's plight as well as her liberation through the birth of Epaphus. The following sections, with Danaus' announcement of the Argive decree, his viewing the Egyptian ships and the confrontation between the Egyptians, who treat the Danaids as their property, and the defiance of the Argive king, are close to the Aeschylean version. The rest of the play is the most innovative as it fuses the Amymone-story with that of Hypermestra. Amymone is sent to fetch water for the dinner. A dominant part is played by the divine comments that the Danaids will eventually get married and that they will learn through suffering (the Aeschylean 'learning through suffering' made famous from *Agamemnon*). The divine predictions thus ironically undermine the Danaids' wish, also found in Aeschylus, that Zeus may give victory to women. Danaus' dream predicts disaster, the Argive king is killed in the battle against the Egyptians.

The chorus of the fifty sons of Aegyptus, bare-chested men with shaved heads and dressed in bright orange pants, rush to the stage to claim their brides. In the confrontation the Aegyptiads carry flaming torches and the women make an enclosure with the suitcases but their suitors break through. The gods sing the Aeschylean fragment⁸³ about love as a force in the universe. As the preparations for the weddings begin, the women conspire to kill their grooms. They cast off their blue garments and lure the grooms under their diaphanous costumes, which stand for tent-like shrouds. The lights in the tents are turned

off, as one after another each Danaid kills her groom, except for Lynceus, who flees. The gods predict the murderous Danaids' punishment and in the whirls of a celebratory waltz Lynceus fulfils divine revenge by pursuing and killing Danaus' daughters in what is presented as a nightmare for the victims. At the end, their white suitcases, arranged on the stage, fall like dominoes, rounding off the device of having Zeus play with dominoes at the beginning. Hypermestra dreams that she is Amymone, who leaves to fetch water. Riding the waves of the sea, depicted by satyrs pulling a blue cloth, she dreams that she is surrounded by the satyrs and rescued by Poseidon. Water being poured by Poseidon upon the body of Amymone as a blessing both symbolically denotes the idea of fecundity expounded at the end of the scene and connotes the idea of fertility and redemption associated with Hypermestra. In the epilogue the phantoms of the Danaids suffer endless torture as the gods say their punishment was justifiable.

A strong interest in the political overtones of the Aeschylean play can also be seen in the 1998 staging of the play at the Gate Theatre in London, translated and directed by James Kerr. As Kerr remarks,⁸⁴ Aeschylus in *Suppliants* stresses the theme of exile as he gives voice to the struggle of the individual without a home. By contrast, Charles M. Mee, an American postmodern playwright, deconstructs the important theme of exile, and focuses on arranged marriages as a theme which raises serious social concerns. His *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium* (1999),⁸⁵ is an adaptation of Aeschylus' trilogy against the background of contemporary popular culture, which exploits the ideas of male domination and female emancipation, giving a comic twist by presenting the subject-matter as the turning of a domestic violence situation into melodramatic tragi-comedy. Already in the first scene, which sets the tone for the entire play, the ideas of war, refugees,⁸⁶ immigration and political oppression are raised in passing as probable causes of the maidens' escape, only to be replaced by the fact that what the maidens have fled from is arranged marriage. When the women mention their status as refugees in order to be granted help, their host faces no tragic dilemma: his reaction is to refuse to help them, comically saying that he is not the Red Cross, and he eventually sells them out to their suitors to be married immediately. Overall, Mee's comic reworking of the Aeschylean trilogy eliminates any idea of civic responsibility or moral dilemma.

The setting of the play is in modern Italy, where Piero (Pelasgus) is a wealthy and self-seeking villa-owner. The large numbers of the choruses (the Danaids and the Aegyptiads) are condensed into groups of three for each: in the first scene one of the maidens says that she has escaped along with her forty-nine sisters but only three appear on

stage in the play, thus facilitating the concentration on individual characters. Contrary to Aeschylus, where the use of the chorus stresses the collective voice of the Danaids, Mee presents three different types of women: Lydia is the sweet type who feels uncertain about getting married and serves as the equivalent of Hypermestra; Thyona is an extreme feminist ('boys should be flushed down the toilet'), who acts as the leader in revolting against their marriage; and Olympia, the youngest, is the excessively shallow and self-absorbed type. They have travelled from Greece to Italy in order to escape their marriage, arranged by their father, with their Greek-American cousins. There is no hint at incest in Mee's play. A sense of urgency is evident in that the three women are still wearing their wedding-gowns. The corresponding suitors are Nikos, Lydia's sensitive groom, who is in love with her and gets confused by Lydia's flight, Constantine, Thyona's groom, a male chauvinist who is determined to reclaim what he considers to be his own and believes that 'all life is rape', and Oed, Olympia's groom, who is generally passive and shows no rage against Olympia. The suitors, who arrive in an army-helicopter to bring their brides back, are meant to evoke a military assault. The cast is supplemented by Giuliano, Piero's gay nephew who sympathizes with the sisters, Piero's wise mother, Bella, who speaks favourably of her twelve sons, Eleanor, a hedonist English woman, and her paramour named Leo. Bella and Eleanor may be said to represent the central notions of motherhood or fecundity and sexual union, which are of fundamental importance in the Aeschylean trilogy.

The play is rich in feminist rhetoric, distorted into comic exaggeration, as exemplified by Thyona, an extreme feminist who hates men. The feminist extremity is entirely represented by these women, hence there is no need for Danaus as an instigator and Mee eliminates this figure entirely from his work.⁸⁷ These women who detest marriage are presented as having no mature interests in any serious alternative in their lives, such as a career or any kind of ambition.⁸⁸ When they are left with no choice other than to marry their cousins, the three women make a pact to murder them on the wedding night. Thyona, who instigates the crime, argues that since they have no protection from either their father, their country or their host, they need to take care of themselves. She also rationalizes the crime beforehand, arguing that if the suitors were soldiers coming into their rooms then the girls would kill them in self-defence. Following the wedding celebrations, all the grooms are killed except for Nikos. The play follows the assumption that Hypermestra was put on trial in Aeschylus and has Lydia put on trial for treason and eventually acquitted by Bella, who, after having heard both sides, declares that 'love trumps all. Love is the highest law'. At the end of the play, the

sisters bid farewell to the couple, and Lydia tosses her bouquet into the audience. The closing gesture reverses her opening gesture of casting the bridal bouquet on the ground: the use of these gestures at both the beginning and the end of the drama may recall the structure of the Aeschylean trilogy, which begins with a rejection of marriage and ends with a confirmation of its value.

To conclude: the popularity of the play in antiquity is attested in the pictorial record, which depicts Aeschylus' innovation in portraying the Danaid family as suppliants; the play also exerted an influence on the typical structuring of subsequent suppliant tragedies. The loss of the other two plays of the Danaid trilogy is particularly frustrating, since it was the Danaids' crime and Hypermetra's sparing of Lynceus that proved particularly popular in all subsequent treatments from classical antiquity to modern times. Attempts to reconstruct the Danaid trilogy and trace likely points of contact between the Aeschylean treatment and later versions suggest that elements such as Hypermetra's tragic dilemma as the result of conflicting loyalties to her father and her husband, as well as the idea of the Danaids' redemption, may have originally featured in Aeschylus. Subsequent treatments adjusted the material according to contemporary tastes: the Romans viewed the Danaid myth as having some resonance with the victory of Rome over the East, but also stressed Hypermetra's divided loyalties and her virtues of piety and clemency. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries great interest was shown, especially in opera, in the romantic love between Hypermetra and Lynceus. This was often accompanied by a strong anti-tyrannical tendency in versions which portrayed Danaus as a ruthless tyrant obsessed with royal power. During the twentieth century, the troubled political state in several parts of the world, the experience of war, which often divided communities, and its aftermaths, including the problem of refugees and their need for asylum, saw in the Aeschylean play a suitable vehicle for the expression of relevant concerns. But the Danaid myth has also received comic adaptations, such as the post-modern treatment by Charles Mee, who focused on an exaggerated version of female rejection of arranged marriages. Overall, the Aeschylean version of the Danaid myth has had a lasting appeal from antiquity to modern times. Its continuous relevance attests to its power to reverberate in different historical and cultural contexts. This power, after all, is an aspect of the universal character of Greek tragedy, the themes of which often reflect timeless human concerns in a continuous and engaging dialogue with its various audiences.

1. Life and Works

1. *Life of Aeschylus*, a Hellenistic collection of mostly anecdotal material. For the highly speculative character of the ancient biographical testimony, see [Lefkowitz 1981](#).

2. Suda, a tenth-century AD encyclopaedia.

3. See the ancient evidence in [Garvie 2006²](#), 21-2.

4. *Life of Aeschylus*; Athenaeus, *Banquet of the Sophists* 1.21d-22a. See also [Taplin 1977](#), 13-14.

5. See the catalogue in Page 1972, 335 and in *TrGF*, vol. 3, 58-9.

6. Although the authenticity of *Prometheus Bound* was not questioned in antiquity, modern criticism tends to regard it as post-Aeschylean. For a detailed study, see [Griffith 1977](#); cf. [Griffith 1983](#), 31-3; [West 2007](#).

7. For attempts to group the plays into trilogies and tetralogies, see [Smyth 1926](#), 375-9; *TrGF*, vol. 3, 111-19; [Gantz 1979](#) and [Gantz 1980](#); [Sommerstein 1996](#), 53-70 and [Sommerstein 2008](#), xxix-xxx.

2. The Danaid Trilogy

1. [Lloyd-Jones 1964](#), 372-3, rightly stresses the fallacy of the belief that artistic forms develop in a linear manner like plants or animals. Cf. [Michellini 1982](#), 6, for a criticism of the idea of literary development as a straightforward evolutionary process and of arbitrary assumptions about what is regarded as 'primitive'. On the two theories about the history of early tragedy, one in favour of and another against the idea of homogeneous development, see [Michellini 1982](#), 3-6.

2. [Lobel 1952](#), 30.

3. Long before the discovery of the papyrus fragment, [Nestle 1934](#) had argued for a later date for *Suppliants*, contrary to the prevailing view that the play was archaic.

4. *P. Oxy.* 2256.3 = *TrGF*, vol. 1, 44-5 (*Didasc.* C 6). For a full discussion of the fragment, see [Garvie 2006²](#), 1-28.

5. There is, however, a discrepancy between Plutarch (*Cimon* 8), who argues that Sophocles' first production was in 468 and Eusebius' chronicle that gives 470 BC. [Scullion 2002](#), 85-8, follows Eusebius and suggests that Aeschylus' *Suppliants* was probably produced in 470.

Although this possibility cannot be excluded, it would be uncertain whether Aeschylus defeated Sophocles in 470 and whether he actually competed with the Danaid trilogy (Garvie 2006², x).

6. Snell in *TrGF*, vol. 1, Scullion 2002, 87n.24 and Sandin 2003, 2-3, have suggested instead that the restoration of the word would simply give 'archontos', hence the full meaning would be 'in the archonship of'. Their argument is based on the estimated space compared to a similar fragment, but no definite conclusion can be reached. Cf. Garvie 2006², ix.

7. Lesky 1954 accepts a date in the 460s, with 463 as most likely, and so do Forrest 1960 and Garvie 2006², xv, 11. 463 BC is also accepted by Page 1972.

8. Kakridis was originally reluctant to accept a date after 470, but later changed his mind and favoured a date between 467 and 458. See Kakridis 1954, 170 and Kakridis 1958, 141-53 respectively.

9. For a discussion and a refutation of these views, see Garvie 2006², 19-26. Cf. Lesky 1965, 59.

10. Garvie 2006², 27-8.

11. All arguments, stylistic and historical, regarding an early date have been discussed at length and refuted by Garvie 2006², 29-162. See also, in brief, Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 25-9. For a similar discussion, see also Lloyd-Jones 1964.

12. See esp. Pelling 1997.

13. Diamantopoulos 1957 argued that the play reflected events in the 490s. For the most recent attempt to suggest a date (461) on the basis of political allusion, see Sommerstein 1996, 403-5 and Sommerstein 1997, 76-9. See further Chapter 6. Sandin 2003, 4, holds that the Argive prominence in the play makes a date in the late 460s attractive. For the issue of using political allusion to establish date, see Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 26; Garvie 2006², 26.

14. Carpenter 1991, 41.

15. For a full overview of the theories developed regarding the reconstruction of the trilogy, see Garvie 2006², 183-233.

16. This has been generally accepted since Schlegel 1811 (= 1817²) vol. 1, 158 (Garvie 2006², 2n.4, 163n.1)

17. Sandin 2003, 9n.28; Garvie 2006², 191.

18. Cf. del Grande 1947; Rösler 1993; Sommerstein 1995 and Sommerstein 1996, 143-6. An exception is Brown 1983, who argues that the play was set in Egypt but treated the event of Io's arrival there.

19. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1961; Garvie 2006², 185-6.

20. E.g. scholia (ancient comments) on *Iliad* 1.42 and on [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound* 853.

21. Cf. Sandin 2003, 10-11; Garvie 2006², xviii.

22. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 25.

23. In traditional accounts Danaus was the king of Argos. In the course of *Suppliants*, his receiving a bodyguard may signal his upcoming rise to kingship (Winnington-Ingram 1961, 142&n.9).

24. See Smyth 1926, 394-5; Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 41; Seaford 1987, 115; Sommerstein 2008b, 40.

25. Smyth 1926, 394.

26. Here the ironic contrast is reported, whereas a similar situation is more vividly dramatized in Euripides' *Phaethon*, where Phaethon's corpse is being carried at the time when the chorus sing a wedding song for him (Smyth 1926, 395).

27. Garvie 2006², 230.

28. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 41-2; Garvie 2006², 204-6.

29. Garvie 2006², 204-11.

30. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 149.

31. Cf. Apollo vs Athena in the *Oresteia*.

32. Cf. Sutton 1974, 202, who also finds it tempting to draw a parallel between the role of Artemis in the trilogy and Amymone in the satyr-play, as Amymone in the story known from other versions was presented as a huntress, hence in a manner reminiscent of Artemis' devotees, when she was attacked by the satyr.

33. Winnington-Ingram 1969, 149.

34. According to the scholium on Euripides' *Orestes* 872, Danaus (not his daughters) was brought to trial by Aegyptus, who came to Argos in order to avenge his murdered sons.

35. As Zeitlin 1996a, 169, suggests, the abundance of legal terms in the play as well as the imagery of flight (of the Danaids) and pursuit (by the suitors) may imply that the trilogy ended with the institution of a law court, while the terms for flight (*pheugein*) and pursuit (*diôkein*) may have acquired the specific meanings of defence and prosecution respectively.

36. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 143.

37. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 143.

38. Maddalena 1951, 100n.23, rejects any idea of purification in the third play. By contrast, most scholars, as early as Fritz 1936 (268), hold that some sort of purification featured at the end of the trilogy.

39. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 150.

40. For a recent attempt to trace allusions to the Danaids as water-nymphs in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, further developed in the accompanying satyr drama *Amymone*, see Bachvarova 2009.

41. LIMC 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 337.

42. Robertson 1924. Cf. Detienne 1988, 173; Zeitlin 1996, 163-9; Belfiore 2000, 60; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 216.
43. On this religious festival, see Parke 1977, 82-8; Burkert 1985, 242-6.
44. See Foley 1994, 104-12 and Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 217.
45. Keuls 1974, 72.
46. On the play, see Sutton 1974.
47. See Sutton 1974, 193n.3.
48. Sutton 1974, 195-6.
49. For other examples of satyr-plays as parodies of tragedies, see Sutton 1974, 196-7.

3. The Danaid Myth

1. Danaus' wisdom is mentioned at *Suppliants* 320, where Aeschylus alludes to the etymological connection between the name Danaus and the verb **daô*, *daênai*, which means 'to know' or 'to be experienced in'. For the 'etymological' meaning of names, see Verdenius 1985, 290.
2. LIMC 3.1. s.v. 'Danaos', 341.
3. This work dates from the second or third century AD, hence its attribution to Apollodorus, an Athenian writer of the second century BC, is wrong. It may not be excluded, of course, that the reference is to another Apollodorus (cf. Fowler 2000, xxvii n.2). On the author and his mythographical work, see more recently Smith and Trzaskoma 2007.
4. For an overview of Hypermestra's motives in literature, see Reeson 2001, 220-2.
5. In Euripides' *Orestes*, a play in which the people of Argos are about to put Orestes on trial, there is a reference to Danaus being prosecuted by Aegyptus (872-3).
6. Bonner 1902, 139. On the Pelasgian population at Argos, see Hall 1989, 170-2.
7. On the play, see Collard, Cropp and Gibert 2004, 330-62.
8. Gantz 1993, 198.
9. Apollodorus, 2.1.1, who draws from *Acusilaus* fr. 25 (Fowler) as well as from Hesiod's *Ehoiae* fr. 160 M-W, where Pelasgus is autochthonous.
10. Diodorus of Sicily 5.58.1 (Egypt); Apollodorus 2.1.11 (Libya). Diodorus of Sicily 1.28 relates the Egyptians' version about founding Argos along with other colonies, while in 17.50.2 Danaus is called an Egyptian. For Herodotus (2.91) Danaus came from the Egyptian city of

Chemmis.

11. [Hall 2002](#), 138-40 (cf. Hall 1989, 36-7).

12. See also Sandin 2003, 5.

13. For a discussion and a refutation of this interpretation, see [Bonner 1900](#), 28-30.

14. E.g. [Roscher 1884-1937](#), vol. 1, 950f.

15. Bonner 1900, 28-9 and Bonner 1902, 146-7.

16. The *Ehoiae*, also known as the *Catalogue of Women*, is ascribed to Hesiod but its authorship and date are debatable. See more recently [Hunter 2005](#).

17. For the associations of the number 50 with myth and cult, see [Dowden 1989](#), 157-8 and [Sauzeau 2005](#), 279-83. For its magic character, see Keuls 1974, 49n.12.

18. Bonner 1900, 30 and Bonner 1902, 147-8.

19. [Bachofen 1861](#).

20. See Garvie 2006², 212-13.

21. [Schwartz 1893](#).

22. In a slightly similar manner during the early twentieth century, [Nilsson 1932](#) put forward the view that the Danaid myth reflected a time when the Danaans attacked Egypt.

23. Bonner 1900 and in more detail Bonner 1902. For the tracing of the folk motif in a Hittite text of the fifteenth century BC, in which thirty men, all but one, intend to marry thirty sisters, see [Burkert 1991](#), 534 and [West 1997](#), 446-7.

24. A similar approach, based on comparative mythology, was applied by [Megas 1933](#), who rejected any historical origin in the myth and considered it as a variation on the theme of pursuit and flight.

25. Bonner 1900, 33 and Bonner 1902, 154.

26. Bonner 1902, 149.

27. Bonner 1900, 32 and Bonner 1902, 153.

28. For the joint use of these myths in Euripides' *Hecuba* (886-7), see [Chapter 8](#).

29. The myth is extensively treated in Hellenistic epic by Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.609-909.

30. [Harrison 1908](#), 620.

31. Bonner 1902, 172.

32. Bonner 1902, 154.

33. Bonner 1902, 168-9.

34. [Rohde 1898](#)², vol. 1, 326ff.

35. This vessel, which was originally used for marriage ceremonies, later came to be associated with funerals, especially of unmarried girls. Cf. [Taplin 2007](#), 293.

36. See Bonner 1902, 170 and Keuls 1974, 52-5 for criticism.
37. Bonner 1902, 173.
38. Bonner 1902, 171-2.
39. On the sources of Polygnotus, see [Small 2003](#), 164-72.
40. Small 2003, 168.
41. Horace *Odes*, 2.14.18-19, 3.11.21-29; Tibullus, 1.3.80-1; Propertius, 2.1.67, 4.11.27-8. For the fusion of the water-carriers with the story of the Danaids, see Keuls 1974, 43-59. For later references to the punishment of the Danaids, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.462-3, 10.43-4; Ovid, *Ibis* 177, 356; Seneca, *Medea* 748-9, Seneca, *Hercules Furens* 498-500, 757.
42. The reading of insatiable desire as the heart of the Danaids' endless torture goes back to Plato's *Gorgias* 493a-b and is standard in several periods. Cf. [Schopenhauer 1819](#), vol. 1, 318. See [Bowlby 2007](#), 98n.40.
43. See Small 2003, 98-100.
44. Keuls 1974, 80.
45. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 338-40.
46. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 341.
47. See also [Chapter 8](#).
48. Keuls 1974, 6, 73.
49. Keuls 1974, 7.
50. Keuls 1974, 74. Keuls regards the water-carrying element as a purifying ordeal and traces it back to Aeschylus' trilogy.
51. These vessels were particularly associated with tomb offerings. See Taplin 2007, 293.
52. Keuls 1974, 7, 74-7. For the ancient iconographic record regarding Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy, see [Chapter 8](#).
53. Keuls 1974, 57.
54. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 44-5; Garvie 2006², 177-80.
55. For translations of these epic fragments, see [West 2003](#). On these epics, see in general [Davies 1989](#). Discussion of the ones treating Argive myths can be found in [Huxley 1969](#).
56. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 24.
57. See Gantz 1993, 199&n.2.
58. Gantz 1993, 203.
59. The fragments of the early Greek mythographers are included in the fragments of the Greek historians edited by Jacoby (*FGrH*) but are re-edited separately by Fowler (2000), which is now the standard edition. For a concise introduction to mythography, see Smith and Trzaskoma 2007, x-xxviii.

60. For the use of the myth of Danaus in the ode and its connection to Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy, see Winnington-Ingram 1969.
61. Cf. Pausanias 3.12.2; Hyginus 170; Apollodorus 2.1.22.
62. Bonner 1900, 34; Bonner 1902, 163.
63. Bonner 1900, 29; Bonner 1902, 142-4.
64. Maehler 2004, 205.
65. Maehler 2004, 133.
66. The genealogy connecting Danaus, Lynceus, Abas and Proetus leading to Heracles is recounted in the prologue of Euripides' *Archelaus* (TrGF fr. 228, 228a).
67. See Garvie 2006², 139.
68. Cf. LIMC 3.1. s.v. 'Danaos', 342.
69. Cf. Gantz 1993, 206.

4. Religion

1. As Lattimore 1964, 46-7, pointed out long ago, supplication is a distinctive story-pattern in Greek tragedy.
2. See Gould 1973.
3. See Gould 1973, 84n.51; Naiden 2006, 241&n.123.
4. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, 6. On this epithet, see also Dobias-Lalou 2001 and Sandin 2003, 38-40.
5. See Kreps 1990, 186-211.
6. See Gould 1973, 94-5.
7. See Gould 1973, 85-90.
8. For pollution resulting from any violation of the suppliants' divinely sanctioned rights, see Parker 1983, 146, 185. For the wrath in the case of a supplication rejected, cf. *Eumenides* 232-34.
9. On threats as an indication of despair during supplication, see Naiden 2006, 84-6.
10. By contrast, Bednarowski 2010 holds that the Danaids' threat to commit suicide if Pelasgus does not help them is not important evidence of their manipulative nature.
11. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, 393.
12. See Ostwald 1989, 145.
13. Gould 1973, 90.
14. For suicide in the play, see Garrison 1995, 81-9.
15. The phrase 'Apian land' also recalls the Egyptian Apis, who was identified with Epaphus (Herodotus 2.153). For such word-plays, see Garvie 2006², 71-2.
16. Cf. Turner 2001, 35-6.
17. Cf. Turner 2001, 38-9, who suggests that at the end of the

trilogy the Aegyptiads turn from persecutors into protectors through Lynceus, who brings purification to Argos as Apis did in the past. Cf. Zeitlin 1996a, 163, on the parallel between Apis in the past and Hypermestra and Lynceus in the future.

18. Zimmerman 1991, 37-8.

19. For the tension in the play between fear of violence and use of violence, see Brill 2009.

20. Turner 2001, 45.

21. For the density of religious elements in the play, see in general Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 207-13

22. For Zeus in Aeschylus, see in general Lloyd-Jones 1956; Grube 1970. For detailed readings of Aeschylean dramas in terms of the role of Zeus, see Bees 2009. For the orientalized version of Zeus, evident especially in the Danaids' evocation of him as 'lord of lords' at 524, see West 1997, 557.

23. Cf. Mastronarde 2005, 324. Mastronarde here aptly compares the ambivalent portrayal of Apollo in Euripides' *Ion* and suggests that such presentations reveal the confusion in human approaches to the divine.

24. Durand 2005, 56-9, regards Hera as responsible for all enmity in Io's descendants.

25. See Brill 2009, 175-6, for a discussion of the Danaids' selective appropriation of the myth of Io as a dramatic means to legitimize their flight as well as to suggest a poet's selective deployment of myths.

26. See *contra* Belfiore 2000, 47-8, who believes that Io's union with Zeus was voluntary, hence regards Zeus' force as benevolent throughout and finds his human equivalent in the figure of Pelasgus, while she in turn parallels the suitors to the inimical part of Hera (57). However, although Belfiore (47, 60) is right in stressing that it is in [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound* (671) that Io's union with Zeus is involuntary, there is no mention in *Suppliants* that this union (lines 295 and 300) was voluntary either.

27. See Padel 1995, 15-17.

28. For Io as the paradigm for the Danaids and for the parallel between Hypermestra and Io, see Murray 1958. Cf. Orselli 1990 and Bachvarova 2001, 68, who stress that the Danaids reject motherhood, despite its fundamental role in Io's case. For Io as an allegorical mother for the Danaids, see Travis 1999, 103-16.

29. On the gentle as well as violent aspect of Zeus in the play, see Winnington-Ingram 1961, 150.

30. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 145; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 216.

31. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 145-50.

32. Apollodorus 2.1.22.

33. Similar references to blessings appear in *Eumenides* 906-12 and in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 225-37. In each case the prosperity of a community is associated with its righteousness. See [Solmsen 1949](#), 213-14.

34. For Artemis' association with both virginity and childbirth, cf. Burkert 1985, 151: 'just as the plague god is also the healing god, so the virgin is also the birth goddess'.

35. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 210-11.

36. For the conflation between marriage and death in Greek tragedy, see [Rehm 1994](#).

37. Orselli 1990, 24, parallels Aphrodite with Hera and suggests that as Hera punished Io, so Aphrodite punished the Danaids who neglected her by stirring their cousins' erotic desire.

38. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 322.

39. [Breitenberger 2007](#), 29.

40. On Hera's cultic association with Argos, see esp. Sauzeau 2005, 73-118.

41. See further [Bittrich 2005](#), 25-6.

42. For the polarity between persuasion and violence in both gender relations and politics, see [Buxton 1982](#), 67-90; [Petre 1986](#), 28; Zeitlin 1996a, 136-46.

43. Cf. [Mackinnon 1978](#), 80-1.

44. See Seaford 1987, 114&n.94; for Persuasion (*Peithô*) beside a bridal couple in ancient art, cf. Belfiore 2000, 51. For the association between Aphrodite and persuasion, see Breitenberger 2007, ch. 6.

45. See Seaford 1987, 117&nn.115, 116, for examples from literature and art.

46. See [Allan 2005](#), 75. See further Bittrich 2005, 17-30.

47. Whereas in epic Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus, in Hesiod's *Theogony* (154-206) she is the oldest of all Olympian gods as the product of the violent differentiation of Heaven and Earth. On Aphrodite's cosmogonic associations, see Burkert 1985, 154. The union between heaven and earth was a topos in wedding ceremonies, for which see Seaford 1987, 117&n.117.

48. Cf. [Zeitlin 1990](#), 112; Belfiore 2000, 60.

49. See Just 1989, 239.

50. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, *ad loc.*

5. Gender

1. For the Danaids' aversion to marriage as an institution, see

Robertson 1924; [Spier 1962](#); [Caldwell 1974](#); [Gantz 1978](#); Zeitlin 1996a; Sommerstein 1996, 144-7. Garvie 2006², 221, accepts that there are references indicating a general aversion to marriage, though he admits (62) that it is not made clear whether the Danaids oppose the institution of marriage in general or the specific wedding in particular.

2. See esp. [Redfield 1982](#) and Detienne 1988. Cf. [Auffarth 1999](#), 42-4, 48, on the liminality of the Danaids as pre-nuptial maidens, and Sauzeau 2005, 316-33, on the initiatory character of the Danaid myth as the passage into marriage.

3. See Seaford 1987 (110-19 on the Danaids); Gödde 2000, 215-48; Vasunia 2002, 54-6.

4. On the imagery in the play, see in brief [Conacher 1996](#), 132-40; Garvie 2006², 69-72.

5. Flight and wandering (Io, Danaids) as well as suicidal thoughts (Danaids) were explained by Hippocratic medicine as due to a kind of madness of virgins which is cured by marriage and pregnancy. See Zeitlin 1996a, 154-5. Cf. [Foley 2001](#), 114. See further Bachvarova 2001, *passim*. On women in the Hippocratic corpus, see in general [Hanson 1990](#) and [King 1998](#).

6. On animal imagery in the play, see [Dumortier 1975](#)² and [Zelenak 1998a](#).

7. Zeitlin 1996a, 127-8. For a reading of the Danaid chorus with an emphasis on their virginity, see [Fletcher 2007](#), who also discusses the virgin choruses in *Seven against Thebes* and *Eumenides*.

8. See Bachvarova 2001 for a stimulating discussion of the parallels between the Aeschylean play and Mesopotamian birth incantations meant to relieve the suffering of women in labor. The attempts by scholars in general to trace Near Eastern prototypes in Greek myths owe much to West 1997 (442-6 on Io and the Danaids).

9. See Zeitlin 1990, 106; Zeitlin 1996a, 132.

10. Zeitlin 1996a, 136.

11. See Detienne 1988, 163 and Zeitlin 1996a, 136n.34. For the motif of the suppliant bride, see Belfiore 2000, 49-54, who persuasively argues that the relationship between Zeus *Hikesios* and Io is a dramatic prototype of the union between the husband and the suppliant bride.

12. The term *hubris* ('insolence'), often used of the suitor's insolence, was also the legal term for 'rape'. See Zelenak 1998a, 51, for lines 98-104; Bowlby 2007, 82. For the use of the term in the play, see further [Doyle 1984](#), 56. For the importance in Athenian male ideology of rational self-control as opposed to incontinence and yielding to bodily appetites, see Just 1989, 152-93.

13. On the Greek principle regarding the roles of husband and wife, cf. [Wiles 2000](#), 73.

14. [Seaford 1984](#)-5 and [Seaford 1987](#), 114-15, discussing the divided choral song in relation to a tradition of wedding songs traced in Sappho and leading to Catullus 62.

15. Cf. [Winnington-Ingram 1961](#), 144; [Lévy 1985](#). See further [Sullivan 1993](#), 75, who also gives a close examination of the Danaids' thoughts throughout the play.

16. For the Danaids as Amazon-like figures who hate men, see esp. [Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1914](#), 15. Perhaps the most extreme view regarding the Danaids' motivation is expressed by [Bachofen 1861](#), who argues that the maidens want to return to an old social system where women were in charge (gynaecocracy) (see [Chapter 3](#)). On the Amazons, see esp. [Tyrrell 1984](#) and [Blok 1995](#).

17. See [Zeitlin 1996a](#), 171.

18. Cf. [Zeitlin 1990](#), 106.

19. Cf. [Rohweder 1998](#), 109. For a reading of the conflict as a wider conflict over power, see [Rohweder 1998](#), 79-119.

20. Cf. [Zeitlin 1996a](#), 140.

21. For the Argives' decision against unwilling marriage, cf. [Cuniberti 2001](#), 154.

22. Cf. [Zeitlin 1996a](#), 140.

23. Cf. [Thomson 1946](#)², 301; [Gantz 1978](#), 285; [Foley 2001](#), 114-15.

24. [Zelenak 1998a](#), 53; [Thomas 1998](#), 195.

25. See [Wiles 2000](#), 72-3.

26. See [Loraux 1998](#).

27. Cf. [Bowlby 2007](#), 82, who compares the Danaids' assertiveness to that of tragic heroines like Antigone, Electra or Medea, and describes the Aeschylean protagonists as 'proto-feminists' with 'a kind of daughterly feminism'. [Elisei 1928](#) overemphasizes the Danaids' dependence on their father to the point of considering them as mere instruments of his plottings. But the Danaids' obedience does not contradict their independence or their role as protagonists. For a balanced approach to the function of the Danaids as the chorus in dramatic terms, see [Garvie 2006](#)², 126-30, 135-7.

28. Obedience to their father is later called by them an unwritten law. Heracles too in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* 1178, refers to a son's obedience to his father as a law. In the Danaids' case this obedience eventually results in murder.

29. Such ideas often permeate feminist treatments of the myth. [Mona Caird's](#) *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), a feminist classic novel, rejects the Victorian standards of femininity and shows how marriage

and family thwart talented women from achieving their goals. Although no murder is involved, the choice of the title and the overall effect of marriage on the protagonist, Hadria Fullerton, reveal the latter as a 'Danaid feminist'. See Bowlby 2007, 99-100.

30. Cf. Zelenak 1998a, 55, who argues that the trilogy as a whole dramatizes the issue of patriarchal authority until Hypermestra decides to disobey her father and spare her husband.

31. For such psychoanalytic readings of the Danaids' strong attachment to their father, which leads them to an obsessive fear of marriage and hatred of other men, see Caldwell 1974; Lembke 1975, 11. On the other hand, Zeitlin 1996a, 154, goes as far as to suggest that the Danaids have a veiled erotic desire for Zeus. On the Danaids' rejection of marriage as a perversion of the natural order, see Gantz 1978, 287.

32. For a reading of the play in the context of ancient Greek female choruses' performances to indicate their readiness for marriage, see Murnaghan 2005. For the Danaid myth as an example of female initiation, see Dowden 1989, 147-65.

33. For a psychoanalytic approach to Danaus as a jealous father, who tries to prevent his daughters' sexual maturation, see Ryzman 1989.

34. For a balanced approach, see Ewans 1996, xlii.

35. Cf. Zelenak 1998, 52-3.

36. Cf. Zelenak 1998a, 54: 'the radical democratic-patriarchal order of Athens is always portrayed by Aeschylus as a compromise and a synthesis, not an extreme'.

37. Cf. Mackinnon 1978.

38. See Belfiore 2000, 51, for references.

39. This view was originally put forward by Ridgeway 1906, who juxtaposed the older exogamy and matrilinearity to the endogamy and patrilinearity of Aeschylus' era, but it was later associated especially with Thomson 1946² (cf. Thomson 1971). See Beard 2005.

40. Pelasgus' remark here also implies that secular law may have priority over the religious duty to protect the suppliants. See Ostwald 1989, 144.

41. On *epiklêros*, see in brief Gernet 1921; Harrison 1968, 9-12, 132-8; Just 1989, 95-104; Foley 2001, 68-70. The fullest survey of the ancient evidence is Karnezis 1972.

42. As Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, 305, argue, the existence of an Egyptian law here is probably an Aeschylean invention to suggest that the Danaids are not entitled to reject marriage with their cousins. This could corroborate Greek knowledge of the practice of intermarriage in the ruling families of Egypt. This Egyptian

background blends with Greek practice of endogamy in certain cases (see below).

43. Cf. [Ridgeway 1910](#), 193; Thomson 1946², 298-309; Thomson 1971.

44. For a survey of the interpretations of this phrase, which is particularly significant for an understanding of the Danaids' motivation, see more recently Sandin 2003 on 8. See also [Lloyd 2007a](#), 14&n.43.

45. Cf. Kreps 1990, 194.

46. The same image appears in [Aeschylus'] *Prometheus Bound* 857-9. This image first occurs in Homer's *Iliad* (22.139-40), where the doomed Hector flees before Achilles like a dove before a hawk. For the intertextual allusion, see [Garner 1990](#), 27. Cf. Euripides' *Andromache*, 1140-1, where the same image is used for the attack of Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, against his enemies.

47. See Parker 1983, 98.

48. For the story, see *Agamemnon* 1142-6 (cf. 1050-1) for Cassandra's song. For the topic in Greek tragedy, see Rehm 1994, 46n.22 and Loraux 1998, 57-65.

49. For the use of the myth of Tereus and Procne, with an emphasis on Tereus, see [Neuhausen 1969](#).

50. The image of the hawk-pursued nightingale appears in the famous fable reported in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (202-12), where it stands for the idea of the right of might. Hesiod goes on to make clear that the right of might applies to animals and not to humans because Zeus gave to the latter justice. The juxtaposition between hubristic violence and justice in the Hesiodic context is directly relevant to *Suppliants* as well. Cf. [Robertson 1936](#).

51. Cf. Gantz 1978, 280-1

52. Cf. [Ireland 1974](#), 27; Orselli 1990, 22; Garvie 2006², 218-19.

53. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 461b. See the discussion in Just 1989, 76-9.

54. See Garvie 2006², 216.

55. Just 1989, 80. For marriages between cousins in Athens, see [Thomson 1967](#). For the tendency in Greek tragedy to favour endogamous marriages, see Foley 2001, 82-3. As [Sicherl 1986](#), 83, rightly remarks (cf. Garvie 2006², 216), if marriage between cousins were forbidden, then the eventual marriage between Hypermestra and Lynceus would not have been possible.

56. Cf. Antigone's betrothal to her cousin Haemon (Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *Phoenician Women*).

57. Cf. [Macurdy 1944](#), 96; Cuniberti 2001, 153; Garvie 2006², 136, 219.

58. See Just 1989, 80-1.

59. Cf. Robertson 1936, 107n.3. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 39-40, hold that the play focuses on the imposition of marriage on women against their will, while at the same time it is a product of a society where arranged marriages were the norm.

60. E.g. in Euripides *Iphigenia at Aulis* 68-71, it is said that Helen's father allowed her to choose her husband and she chose Menelaus. For examples, see Karnezis 1972, 146-7 and Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, 183.

61. Euripides' *Helen*, a play with several similarities with *Suppliants* (see [Chapter 6](#)), also contrasts marriage by consent (Helen and Menelaus) to marriage by force (Helen and Theoclymenus). Helen clearly argues that marriage against a person's will is reprehensible and considers death to be preferable (296-8).

62. For the Danaids' fear of marrying violent barbarians, cf. [Couch 1932](#); Ireland 1974; Keuls 1974, 65; MacKinnon 1978; [Winnington-Ingram 1983](#), 60. For the importance of the suitors' insolence in the play, see Robertson 1936; del Grande 1947, 86-94.

63. See Zelenak 1998a.

64. See Sicherl 1986; [Rösler 1992](#); [Rösler 1993](#); [Föllinger 2003](#), 199-201, 209; Bittrich 2005, 19-20; [Farenga 2006](#), 378; [Föllinger 2009](#), ch. 6. A slightly modified view is that of Turner 2001, 28, who argues that the oracle is known only to Danaus and not to the Danaids, and its knowledge has made him instil in his daughters an absolute aversion to marriage since childhood (cf. Sommerstein 1996, 146-7). Against the use of the oracle as a motive, see e.g. [Court 1994](#), 154-5; Conacher 1996, 109-11; Garvie 2006², xvii-xviii.

65. See Sommerstein 1996, 148; Turner 2001, 28n.9.

66. Cf. Sandin 2003, 11.

67. Cf. Sicherl 1986; Rösler 1993.

68. Cf. Turner 2001, 28n.9.

69. Cf. Elisei 1928, 211.

70. Similarly the scholium on Euripides' *Orestes* 872 mentions that according to an oracle Danaus will incur a risk if his daughters marry their cousins.

71. Garvie 2006², xviii-xix. Sandin 2003, 11n.30, allows for the possibility that the phrase may denote purpose but argues that the scholiast may be alluding to sources other than the Aeschylean play where the oracle played a part.

72. For the idea of the Danaids' hatred of marriage and of the 'male', see more recently [Collard 2008](#), xl.

73. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 29-33.

6. Politics

1. Historicist readings of Greek tragedy (e.g. [Delebecque 1951](#); [Goossens 1962](#); Podlecki 1966) were often concerned with establishing a date for undated plays. On a survey of scholarly approaches to Greek tragedy as a political medium, see [Carter 2007](#).
2. For an overview, see Garvie 2006², 141-62.
3. Cf. Podlecki 1966, 174n.48. The friendly relation between Argos and Athens in the fifth century has sometimes been exaggerated. For a judicious survey, see [Kelly 1974](#), who concludes (99) that in the fifth century the Athenian policy was generally pro-Argive, while the Argive one should be regarded as anti-Spartan but not necessarily pro-Athenian.
4. Cf. Garvie 2006², 143: 'The playwright is first and foremost a dramatist, not a political propagandist, and it is the critic's first duty to interpret supposed contemporary allusions in the light of their dramatic context'.
5. Diamantopoulos 1957.
6. This view was originally put forward by [Cavaignac 1921](#), who dated the play c. 470 BC, soon after the ostracism. On Themistocles' ostracism, see [Lenardon 1959](#). On his stay in Argos, see Forrest 1960.
7. According to Thucydides (1.136.1) Themistocles fled from Argos in advance, so eventually Argos did not have to face the prospect of war.
8. See Forrest 1960.
9. Sommerstein 1996, 406-9 and Sommerstein 1997, 76-9.
10. On the reversal of Athenian policy which resulted in the alliance with Argos in 461 BC, see Kelly 1974, 84.
11. Contrast Podlecki 1966, 55-62, who stresses (55) the unprecedented treatment by Aeschylus as an indication of allusion to contemporary events.
12. See [Easterling 1985](#), esp. 2-3, who views the play as a discussion of the issues of political power and responsibility.
13. See Lloyd-Jones 1964, 359-60.
14. Cf. Garvie 2006², 152-3. For the presence of democracy in Aeschylean tragedies in general, see more recently West 2007.
15. See Lloyd-Jones 1964, 359 and [Raaflaub and Wallace 2007](#), 28-32. Cf. Collard 2008, xli n.35, who argues that Pelasgus' authority resembles that of Homeric kings in that he both consults and directs his people. As Collard aptly remarks, in *Agamemnon* 844-6, too, the king (Agamemnon) says that, as regards issues concerning the community, he will hold public assemblies and discuss them before the people.

16. The principles of *isonomia* (equality before law) and *parrhêsia* (freedom to speak) were fundamental in democracy already in 508/7 (Cleisthenes' reforms).

17. Cf. Lloyd-Jones 1964, 359.

18. The difficulty of Pelasgus' dilemma is accentuated by the use of nautical imagery (407, 438-41, 470-1), for which see Tarkow 1970.

19. Cf. *Seven against Thebes* 5-8 for the people's tendency to blame the ruler when disaster befalls their city.

20. For the participial clause (*oude per kratôn*) at 399 as conditional ('even if I had the power') instead of concessive ('even though I have the power'), see Garvie 2006², xvi. Burian 2007, 199-200, takes it as concessive and argues that Pelasgus' wish to share responsibility with the people stresses the gravity of the decision. Similarly at 366-7 Pelasgus says that 'if the city is polluted as a community, let the people as a whole strive to work out remedies'. This, however, does not necessarily imply (as Garvie 2006², xvi, holds) that Pelasgus acknowledges that he has no right in making a decision alone, but may be taken to suggest that he opts to consult with the Argives on a serious matter of public concern. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 365-9: 'Pelasgus does not say that he is constitutionally obliged to share any decision with his people, only that he intends to do so'. Rohweder 1998, 148, compares Athena in *Eumenides* (470-89), who refuses to decide on Orestes' case due to its gravity and defers the decision to the people. Collard 2008, 78 and Sommerstein 2008, 343, rightly translate at 399: 'even though I have the power'.

21. Cf. Burian 2007, 203; Bees 2009, 140.

22. Burian 2007, 205, views the Danaids as profoundly barbarian but in a way which reduces them to a foil to Pelasgus and does not do justice to the complex interplay between their double origin.

23. Farenga 2006, 368-98.

24. As Farenga 2006, 359n.23 notes, the demand that both parents are of Athenian origin was probably related to Pericles' citizenship law of 451/50 BC, which also influenced the status of the metics in Athens (see below).

25. This was suggested by Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1887. See further Bakewell 1997 and Cuniberti 2001, 140-6. On Athenian metics, see Whitehead 1977.

26. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 609, argue that the technical term is not commonly used until the fourth century BC but allow for the possibility that inhabitants in Athens with fewer rights than the ordinary citizens were called *metoikoi* by the 460s.

27. Cf. Podlecki 1966, 49, who notes that Pelasgus does not simply

instruct Danaus, as he says (519), on how to speak at the assembly but speaks on his behalf. Both the Danaids and the Egyptian herald are said to have come to Argos without a patron (239, 919), which serves to imply their difference from Greek custom.

28. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 263, 404. Cf. Bakewell 1997, 215. The use of the term here corroborates the connotations of *metoikein* (609) and *metoikos* (994) as technical terms

29. See Bakewell 1997, 213-15. In dramatic terms, the detailed reference to the Danaids' lodging may become significant in the rest of the trilogy, as the murders of the bridegrooms, if they take place in the palace, violate the law of *xenia* ('hospitality') and bring pollution. See Garvie 2006², 182.

30. Bakewell 1997, 226, following the attractive suggestion by Rösler 1989, 111, that the *mono <r> ruthmous domous* ('houses of a single style') at 961 implies uniform external appearances of houses, similar to the architectural style which Hippodamus introduced after the Persian War, goes on to suggest that this lodging evokes Piraeus and its association with metics.

31. See Bakewell 1997, 219-23 and Raaflaub 2007, 112n.10, 115, 137.

32. Sommerstein 1996, 406 (cf. Sommerstein 1997, 75-6) argues that Pelasgus deceives the people by laying emphasis exclusively on Zeus' wrath and concealing from them the dangerous possibility of war with the Egyptians. However, the audience hear the report regarding the assembly by Danaus (605-24) and his description does not necessarily imply that Pelasgus was dishonest with his people. The Argive decision to protect the suppliants against any violence (611-15) implies the Argives' determination to defend the Danaids at all costs, including fighting a war (739-40). Cf. Bakewell 1997, 227, who argues that the Argives are aware of the dangers, yet decide to accept the Danaids.

33. Cf. Sommerstein 1997, 75; Turner 2001, 42. On the democratic vocabulary in the play and its association with Athenian democracy, see Lotze 1981; Petre 1986; Musti 1995, 19-53.

34. See Raaflaub 2007, 108. The linguistic pun implies the existence of the term *dēmokratia* ('democracy') when the play was produced (see Cartledge 2007, 162).

35. On the parallel, see Belfiore 2000, 45. Cf. Bakewell 1997, 216. The link is strengthened as Danaus' report on the Argive voting (600-24) immediately follows the chorus' ode on Io's troubles and eventual release (524-99).

36. On the relation between 'Theseus the king' and 'Theseus the representative of Athenian democracy', see esp. Davie 1982; Walker

1995. For Theseus in Greek tragedy, see [Mills 1997](#).

37. See [Loraux 1986](#), 132-71; [Mills 1997](#), 58-78; [Papadopoulou 2005](#), 153-7; [Tzanetou 2005](#).

38. On Argos in Greek tragedy, see [Saïd 1993](#), who argues that it is a city with no standard associations. However, contrary to Thebes which is sometimes viewed as the antitype of Athens, Argos may be said to be the equivalent of Athens. Cf. [Wiles 2000](#), 97. On the similarity between Argos in *Suppliants* and Athens, cf. [Bakewell 1997](#), 227, who argues that in giving the first prize to the trilogy the Athenians may have been praising their city.

39. See [Thomas 1998](#), 118-22. On the Danaids' self-image with regard to ethnicity, see [Thomas 1998](#), 93-108.

40. They refer to Egypt using the name of the river Nile (4, 281, 307) and avoid mentioning the name 'Egypt'. This is probably due to the association of the name 'Egypt' with Danaus' brother, Aegyptus. This association may be important in a play where both Apis (260-1) and Pelasgus (252-3) are eponymous heroes of Argos (and Danaus is known to have been the eponymous hero of the race generated by Hypermestra and Lynceus), but the country may not have been named by Aegyptus as yet, for the herald too refers to it as the country of the Nile (922). Cf. [Johansen and Whittle 1980](#), vol. 2, 8-9.

41. The play abounds in vocabulary of flight and exile as the Danaids are fugitives seeking refuge (e.g. 4-5, 74, 84, 202, 214). The mythical example (see [Chapter 5](#)) also implies that they view themselves as Greeks pursued by barbarians, as Procne was a Greek (Athenian) princess whereas Tereus was foreign, given that Thrace was associated with barbarity (cf. Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba*). On the ethnic implications of the myth of Procne and Tereus, see [Thomas 1998](#), 100-1.

42. Cf. [Thomas 1998](#), 138-9.

43. Cf. [Garvie 2006](#), 156, who argues that the Aegyptiads may have been presented in a different light in the second play.

44. Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* 337-45 (cf. 1368) uses the stereotype of gender reversal in Egypt, known from Herodotus 2.35 (men stay at home while women work outdoors), to criticize his sons and to praise his daughters. See [Zelenak 1998a](#), 50.

45. On this as the crucial factor in Pelasgus' dilemma, see [Ferrari 1974](#).

46. Cf. [Cuniberti 2001](#), 154-5, who reads the play as a step towards the recognition of the private rights of a free person.

47. Cf. [Turner 2001](#), 41-5 and [Mitchell 2006](#).

48. See esp. [Froidefond \(1971\)](#).

49. The Egyptians' deceitful character is evoked also in an

Aeschylean fragment of an uncertain play (*TrGF* fr. 373), which, however, might belong to the Danaid trilogy, where it is said that the Egyptians are clever at weaving wiles. This is also reflected in the use of the term *aigyptiazein* (literally, ‘to act like an Egyptian’) in the sense ‘to act in a deceitful manner’ in Old Comedy. See the discussion in [Isaac 2004](#), 354&nn.11, 18.

50. See the discussion of the attitudes towards the Egyptians in antiquity by [Isaac 2004](#), 352-70, esp. 353-6, 369.

51. On the presentation of Egypt in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* and in Euripides’ *Helen*, see [Vasunia 2001](#), 33-74.

52. In a typically Euripidean manner, the play subverts gender roles and has Helen devise a plan of escape (1032-1106). Conversely, Menelaus resembles the Danaids when he uses the threat of suicide as a mode of coercion (982-5).

7. Performance

1. Cf. [Canavan 1972](#), 239.

2. [Wiles 1997](#), 196, rightly suggests that there is an allusion to the altar of the twelve gods in the Athenian agora, which would help the audience construe Argos as an analogue of Athens.

3. On the front/back dichotomy of the *orchêstra*, see [Ewans 1996](#), xlv.

4. Cf. [Canavan 1972](#), 134.

5. [Rehm 1988](#) (301-2 on Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*) argues that the staging of the suppliant Greek tragedies centres on the *orchêstra* as the acting area and an altar at or near its centre, hence no stage altar is required at the back. See [Wiles 1997](#), 63-86, on the centre of the *orchêstra* as a focus (196-7 on Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*) and [Collard 2008](#), liv and 202 for *Suppliants*. On this view (cf. [Wiles 1997](#), 197), Danaus is standing on the top of the altar when he sees the approach of the Argives and the Egyptians. But it is more plausible that the mound he refers to is physically represented, and the frequent references made throughout the play to the different levels along with their topographical significance make better sense if these were visually depicted (see below). See [Sandin 2003](#), 18.

6. See [Kuntz 1993](#), 156.

7. See [Taplin, 1977](#), 239; [Ewans 1996](#), xlv. On the left/right dichotomy in Greek tragedy, see in general [Wiles 1997](#), 133-60.

8. This unity is normal but not mandatory. Aristotle (*Poetics* 1449b) argued that tragedy usually covers ‘a single revolution of the sun’. It is true, though, that time is often compressed to suit the needs of the dramatic action, as when in *Agamemnon* the Messenger’s long

voyage is compressed in time and almost coincides with the fire of the beacon (280-582).

9. Ancient tradition ascribed this to Aeschylus (*Life of Aeschylus*) or to Sophocles (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a16-19).

10. The view supported by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1914 that the chorus numbered 50 members results from the statement in Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.110 that the tragic chorus originally consisted of 50 members (as in dithyramb) and from the assumption that the 50 Danaids should be represented by 50 members of the chorus. As Lloyd-Jones 1964, 365-9, has shown, Pollux's evidence is debatable and its use by modern scholars reflects the impression that *Suppliants* belongs to the early stages of tragedy, while the correspondence of the Danaids and the chorus in number is a naturalistic assumption, easily refuted by parallel examples in tragedy: the Furies were thought to be three in myth but are represented by the twelve chorus members in *Eumenides*, while the mothers of the seven leaders in Euripides' *Suppliants* are represented by the fifteen members of the chorus.

11. This is a common assumption and seems more plausible. By contrast, Wiles 2000, 135, holds that a single voice would be difficult to be identified by the audience, hence the chorus may have spoken in unison.

12. On the use of a subsidiary chorus in Greek drama, see [Carrière 1977](#).

13. For this economical representation, see Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 308.

14. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 173. See *contra* Taplin 1977, 316-17, who holds that no secondary chorus accompany the Egyptian herald. As both the singular and the plural are used in references to the chorus in Greek tragedy (cf. [Kaimio 1970](#)), the fact that the Danaids address their adversary in the singular does not necessarily imply that only one person, namely, the herald, is present.

15. This view is as old as the edition of the text in [Tucker 1889](#). Cf. [Ferrari 1972](#); Orselli 1990, 24-6.

16. [Hester 1987](#) argues that the dissonant voice belongs to Hypermestra, whose adversary is probably the chorus-leader. But the argument that Danaus' warning regarding chastity has provoked one Danaid's sudden opposition is weak, while the emergence of a single and anonymous opposing voice at the end of the drama would have risked causing confusion to the audience.

17. See Taplin 1977, 232, although he considers the chorus of Argive guards as more likely.

18. See Lloyd-Jones 1964, 368; Page 1972; [Sommerstein 1977](#), 79. Garvie 2006², 194-5, reviews the arguments for and against this

opinion and leaves the issue open (195).

19. The presence from the very beginning of twelve mutes, as they are said to correspond in number to that of the Danaids (979), may of course be difficult to imagine, but silent extras by convention accompany their masters. On the other hand, the address to them at 977-9 cannot be taken as a signal that they now enter for the first time but rather as a stage direction that they should be arranged in a procession. See Taplin 1977, 234-8.

20. See Sommerstein 1977, 79.

21. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 308-9; Seaford 1987, 114-15; Sommerstein 1996, 140; West 1998²; Belfiore 2000, 58; Collard 2008, xxxix.

22. Seaford 1987, 114-15, suggests that the presence of a female and a male chorus here recalls the choruses of youths and maidens in wedding processions (as in [Hesiod's] *Shield*, 276-84) and that the division of the song into antiphonal voices evokes a tradition of wedding songs in which the fear expressed by the maidens of marriage is picked up and reversed by the males (see [Chapter 5](#)).

23. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 154. On the dark skin of a woman as a marker for masculinity and its implications for the presentation of the Danaids in the play, see Thomas 1998, 142-79.

24. Herodotus 2.37; 2.81.

25. This is the meaning of the word *ampukôma* at 235 and 431; cf. [Brooke 1962](#), 4-5.

26. See Brooke 1962, 97.

27. By contrast, in Euripides' *Children of Heracles*, 130, the king recognizes the herald's Greekness by his outfit (see [Chapter 8](#)).

28. Apart from expressing grief, the tearing of their veils also serves as a symbolic gesture indicating the rejection of marriage, by means of an inversion of the typical veiling and unveiling of the bride in the symbolism of the wedding ritual; see on this Sommerstein 1977, 68, accepted by Sandin 2003 on 120-2 = 131-3 and Bachvarova 2001, 78&n.62 for discussion and references.

29. For the use of pairs of scenes in Greek tragedy which introduce similarities in order to highlight differences, see [Taplin 1978](#), 122-39.

30. Taplin 1977, 201; Sandin 2003 on 234-45.

31. See Brooke 1962, 97. Herodotus 2.36 (cf. 3.12) implies that shaving heads and beards was common practice among Egyptian men.

32. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 22. As Herodotus mentions (2.81), no wool was permitted in Egyptian sanctuaries.

33. See Gantz 1978, 280. For Aeschylus' use of ominous words, see Verdenius 1985, 287n.21. Winnington-Ingram 1961, 148, suggests that the Danaids carried real daggers, but this is unlikely; the word

merely conveys ambiguity. For Belfiore 2000, 42, the use of the word here is meant to recall the aggressive aspect of supplication.

34. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 21; Sandin 2003 on 21-2. Garvie 2006², 61-2. For the contrast in the play between what is said and what eventually happens, see Gantz 1978.

35. As Sandin 2003, 38, aptly remarks, Danaus' entry behind his daughters is meant to stress his protective role in covering the Danaids' backs, as well as his subordinate role in the play.

36. Taplin 1977, 200.

37. See Taplin 1977, 204-6.

38. Sandin 2003, 127-9, 131, is rather inclined to believe that the Danaids do not move up on the mound before the prayer, but that on each invitation by Danaus one of the daughters climbs up to adorn a divine image until (after lines 222-3) the remaining maidens move up to adorn the remaining images and sit down beside their father as suppliants.

39. See Taplin 1977, 211.

40. These allusions to Poseidon are given added significance, as Poseidon played a major role in the satyr-play *Amymone* that accompanied the Danaid trilogy. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 2, on 218.

41. Taplin 1977, 216, argues that the use of force against the Danaids is only intended and never takes place. This view, however, is adduced to reinforce his idea (217) that since no bodily force is used, the presence of a chorus of Egyptians is not necessary. By contrast, according to Goldhill 1991, 24, who regards the scene as particularly violent, the herald touches the Danaids.

42. See Taplin 1977, 218-20.

43. See Sommerstein 2008, 405.

44. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, on 905, suggest that the herald, probably with his attendants, lays hands on the maidens and attempts to remove them from the altar at 905.

45. The reference at 954 to 'friendly escorts' has sometimes been taken to refer to the Egyptian maidservants. This reading, adopted by West 1998², is based on an emendation into *philais* (feminine) of the word transmitted as *philois* (masculine) in the manuscript. For a discussion of the issue, see Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, on 954, who support the masculine form.

46. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, on 972-6. Taplin 1977, 224-9, considers the transition between Pelasgus' exit and Danaus' entry too abrupt, and holds that 825ff. and 980ff. clearly constitute separate acts. He therefore suspects that the anapaests at 966-79 may be the result of an interpolation which replaced the last lines of the

episode with Pelasgus' announced exit and a *stasimon*. This is attractive, though, as he himself admits (229), there is nothing un-Aeschylean in the anapaests, and the reasons of an interpolation are obscure.

47. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 268, who argue in favour of Pelasgus' exit before Danaus' entry.

48. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, on 985-8; Sommerstein 1996, 148.

49. Cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, 272.

50. West 1992, 85.

51. See Wilson 2005, 185.

52. Cf. Wilson 2005, 185-6.

53. On the motif of song in Greek tragedy, see Segal 1989, 341-51.

54. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 3, on 695.

55. Collard 2008, 202.

56. Cf. Kranz 1933, 47; Cannatà Fera 1980; Verdenius 1985, 295. West 1992, 182n.86, refers to line 69 as an example of the Ionian mode in Greek tragedy. Collard 2008, 205, argues that there is no allusion here to the Ionic verse-rhythm, as this has 'chiefly solemn associations'; but this is no adequate reason to deny the possibility of such a connotation, especially when one considers the dramatic effect of a primarily lamentful and emotive rhythm.

57. See in brief Wilson 2005, 186-7. For the musical modes in antiquity, see Winnington-Ingram 1936 and West 1992, 160-89.

58. Although they speak Greek throughout, their foreign origin is recalled when they remark that their language is foreign at 119 and 130. Similarly the Persian chorus in *Persians* (635-6) comment on their barbaric speech.

59. On the use of cretics and dochmiacs at 418-37 to convey the emotion of despair, see Jouanna 2002. On the lyric metres of Greek drama and their connotations, see Dale 1968². On the dramatic function of the lyric metres in *Suppliants*, see Rash 1981.

60. Dale 1968², 110.

61. See Rash 1981, 138-41 and 205-6.

62. On the thematic implications of the *lecythion* in *Suppliants*, see Rash 1981, 169-71, 195-9, 203-4.

63. See Arnott 1989, 56-9 and Wiles 1997, 87-113.

8. Reception

1. Garland 2004, 69-70.

2. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 55. Although not

mentioned in the Aeschylean scholia, Didymus was known to have prepared commentaries on tragedies. See Garland 2004, 48.

3. For an overview of the transmission of the text of *Suppliants*, see Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 55-77.

4. See in detail Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 67-76.

5. See Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 76.

6. These plays (the so-called 'Byzantine triad') were *Prometheus Bound*, *Persians* and *Seven against Thebes*.

7. See Sheppard 1927, 107; Garland 2004, 109-10.

8. For Turnebus' expressed difficulties with the Aeschylean text, see Sheppard 1927, 125.

9. See Garland 2004, 123-4.

10. Garland 2004, 113.

11. See the list of the editions, commentaries and translations of the play in Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 11-13, where the number of works published during the nineteenth century is characteristically high.

12. For the view that artists illustrated stories as opposed to texts, see Small 2003.

13. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides'.

14. On the plethora of theatrical representations on South Italian vases, see Small 2003, 52-61, who stresses that, contrary to the Attic vase-painters of the fifth century, their South Italian fellow artists of the fourth century used to depict scenes taking place on theatrical stages (52).

15. See Keuls 1974 and *LIMC* 3.1 s.v. 'Danaides', 341.

16. *LIMC* 3.1 s.v. 'Danaides', 338, number 5.

17. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaos', 342, numbers 1-2. Cf. Kossatz-Deissmann 1978, 55. See also the perceptive analysis in Stano 2005, 60-2, which is followed in the present discussion.

18. Cf. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaos', 342 for the artistic portrayal of Danaos' mild persona.

19. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 338, numbers 1-4. Cf. Séchan 1926, 521-4. See also Keuls 1974, 74-81 and Stano 2005, 95-9, whose analysis of the scenes is followed in the present discussion.

20. *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 338, number 3. Stano 2005, 96-7.

21. See Garvie 2006², 13 and 22n.1.

22. See Bakola 2009, 141-57.

23. Cf. Bakola 2009, 155-7. For the ironic treatment of the Athenian construct of altruism in Greek tragedy and Thucydides, see Papadopoulou (forthcoming).

24. Cf. Sommerstein 2002, 61.

25. See *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaos', 342, number 5.

26. On these two similar myths, see [Chapter 3](#).

27. See in brief Johansen and Whittle 1980, vol. 1, 45-7.

28. The phrase is ambiguous, as the word *himeros* denotes yearning in general, and has here sometimes been construed with the previous word, *paidôn* taken as objective genitive, in the meaning 'a desire for children'. See Garvie 2006², 225. This would imply a stress on the value of motherhood, but it is better to take *paidôn* as a partitive genitive with the preceding words, in the sense 'one of the maidens'.

29. Marx 1928 argued that this originates in Phrynichus. See Keuls 1974, 61n.3.

30. See esp. Bernek 2004 for the typology of supplication in Greek tragedy, starting from Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. For the similar political overtones, see [Chapter 6](#).

31. Cf. Saïd 2002, 88.

32. See Jacobson 1983, 24-5. For further similarities, see Brant 2005, 136.

33. See the analysis by Garrison 1991, 312-14.

34. Cf. Putnam 1994, 178, who, in a different context, rightly notes that Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy was not exclusively focused on ferocity but presented Pelasgus' favourable response to supplication and Hypermestra's sparing of Lynceus.

35. See Garrison, 1991, 312.

36. See Lefèvre 1989.

37. See Spence 1991, 15&n.20.

38. See Putnam 1994, 180-2 for this line of interpretation.

39. Cf. Spence 1991, 18. For the Danaid crime as a near allegory of civil war, see Putnam 1994, 174.

40. Harrison 1998. Cf. Welch 2005, 86, who, however, rightly allows for the possibility that the same monument could have been interpreted differently by different viewers.

41. See Putnam 1994, 182-3.

42. Putnam 1994, 179.

43. See also Harrison 1998, who gives an overview of scholarly opinions on the issue.

44. See Spence 1991, 14; Putnam 1994; Harrison 1998. Harrison 1998, 42, acutely suggests that the sword-belt and the Danaid sculptures may have a parallel role as spoils if the statues were in fact brought to Rome as spoils of war.

45. See Spence 1991, 16. For the parallel with the Danaids as reflecting the Aeschylean version, see *LIMC* 3.1. s.v. 'Danaides', 337. For the implications of the analogy between Aeneas and female, as opposed to male figures, see Putnam 1994, 187-8.

46. For Aeneas' ambivalence, cf. Spence 1991, 18. For the importance of *clementia* in the *Aeneid*, see in brief Putnam 1994, 179-80 and 182n.31.

47. See Putnam, 1994, 174. In Statius (*Thebaid* 4.131-5) the shield of the Argive Hippomedon bears an emblem of the Danaid crime, though there the stress is on Danaus. See Harrison 1998 for comparisons with the description of Pallas' sword-belt in the *Aeneid*.

48. For a reading of the letter which suggests that Hypermestra writes cryptically and in a rhetorically effective manner that aims at appealing not only to Lynceus but also to Danaus in case it falls into his hands, see Fulkerson 2003 and Fulkerson 2005, 72-82. In this case either Lynceus will come to rescue her or her father will be persuaded that his daughter does not deserve punishment (Fulkerson 2003, 139).

49. Cf. Fulkerson 2003, 134 and Fulkerson 2005, 76. See also Reeson 2001, 262-3, for both the tragic elements as well as the rhetorical elements which recall the rhetorical exercises of *controversiae*, namely, the formulation of arguments on either side of a posed dilemma.

50. Reeson 2001, 263, argues that Hypermestra's monologue cannot have appeared in Aeschylus, given that the events of the weddingnight were probably not depicted on stage, and suggests that Ovid may have drawn from the trial scene, if that appeared in the last play, in which Hypermestra faced an interrogator and defended her deed.

51. Cf. Reeson 2001, 280.

52. Cf. Jäkel 1973, 241.

53. Some have argued that fear refers to her fear of her father, in which case they take fear and piety as contradictory. See instead Jäkel 1973, 246; Fulkerson 2003, 132-3. Fulkerson, in accordance with her argument about the double readership of the letter, in which case ambiguity may be intended, suggests persuasively that '*Timor* could be fear of her father or fear of Lynceus or fear of divine wrath. *Pietas* could be filial or spousal dutifulness or general moral scrupulousness' (133).

54. Jäkel 1973, 247.

55. See Winnington-Ingram 1961, 145.

56. See Fulkerson 2003, 138-9, who notes that familial conflicts and conflicting loyalties were a common phenomenon especially in the period after the civil wars.

57. See Rice 1998, 315-29.

58. Both the presentation of the Danaids as maenads and the collapse of the palace in the end are reminiscent of Euripides' *Bacchae*.

59. See Vitti 1960; Hasapi-Christodoulou 2002, vol. 1, 312-16.

60. See Hasapi-Christodoulou 2002, vol. 1, 315n.257 and 316n.260.

61. According to Vitti 1960, 35, the archetype of Kalvos' Danaus is Saul in Alfieri's tragedy *Saul* (1782), which also portrays a triangle (Saul, David, Micol).

62. For the performance history of the play in modern Greece, see the survey in Arabatzi et al. 1994, which is followed here.

63. For this performance and the reviews by critics of that time, see Arabatzi et al. 1994, 53-6.

64. See Sideris 1976, 392-3; Arabatzi et al. 1994, 53.

65. Palmer-Sikelianos 1992, 144, characteristically reports a correspondence with Gilbert Murray, in which the well-known scholar of Greek tragedy doubted whether this play was suitable for theatrical performance.

66. van Steen 2002, 381.

67. For the revival of the ancient Greek chorus on both these occasions, see Glytzouris 1998. On the second Delphic festival, see Sideris 1976, 403-26 (410-17 on the performance of *Suppliants*).

68. This is discussed in Palmer-Sikelianos 1992, 81. For the Delphic setting as the symbolic embodiment of this idea, see van Steen 2002.

69. See Palmer-Sikelianos 1992, 143-55.

70. Palmer-Sikelianos had herself woven the costumes for *Prometheus Bound* in the first Delphic Festival. For her interest in weaving, see Palmer-Sikelianos 1992, 94-9.

71. Glytzouris 1998, 150-1.

72. Palmer-Sikelianos 1992, 145; van Steen 2002, 378n.16.

73. Glytzouris 1998, 148n.3.

74. See Glytzouris 1998, 165-9.

75. Glytzouris 1998, 149.

76. Hall and Macintosh 2005, 546 and 585.

77. Glytzouris 1998, 149-50; van Steen 2002, 378n.14, adds that this was also common in scholarly works of that time.

78. Jäkel 1973, 247.

79. Glytzouris 1998, 161.

80. See Sideris 1976, 418-19.

81. See Walton 1987, 342; van Steen 2002, 389.

82. Purcarete 1996. See the review by Wilmer 1996.

83. *TrGF* fr. 44 (*Danaids*). See Chapter 2.

84. Kerr 2001, 9.

85. It was staged from 1999 to 2002 by various directors. This and other plays by Charles Mee, can be found in the playwright's website

at www.charlesmee.org.

86. See [Rehm 2002](#), 115n.6 and [Rehm 2003](#), 51 for examples of racism in American refugee politics that Mee does not utilize. Cf. McDonald 2003, 40.

87. [Rehm 2002](#), 114.

88. [Rehm 2002](#), 113.

Guide to Further Reading

This guide offers recommended reading on specific topics. For further reading on Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, please consult the Bibliography.

Aeschylus

The standard edition of Aeschylus is that by West 1998², who collates manuscripts not available to [Page 1972](#). Ancient sources concerning Aeschylus' life and works may be found in *TrGF*, vol. 3, 31-108. The fragments of Aeschylean dramas may be found in the same volume. Text and translation of most fragments appear in Smyth 1926 (frequently reissued) and Sommerstein 2008b. See also [Mette 1959](#) and [Mette 1963](#). On the Aeschylean satyr-plays, see [Ussher 1977](#). For comprehensive studies on Aeschylus, see esp. [Rosenmeyer 1982](#); [Winnington-Ingram 1983](#); [Ireland 1986](#); Sommerstein 1996; Conacher 1996; [Lloyd 2007](#); Föllinger 2009; Bees 2009. On Aeschylus' grandiloquent style, see more recently [Podlecki 2006](#). On Aeschylean imagery, see [Smith 1965](#); [Fowler 1967](#); Dumortier 1975²; [Petrounias 1976](#) (the most detailed).

Suppliants: commentaries and translations

The ancient scholia on the play are collected in [Smith 1976](#), 66-83. [Johansen and Whittle 1980](#) is a detailed commentary on the play, particularly rich in textual issues, in 3 volumes. It also includes (11-13) a list of editions, commentaries and translations of the play from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Sandin 2003 is a helpful commentary on lines 1-523. [Grene and Lattimore 1991](#)² is a reliable translation. [Smyth 1922](#) (Loeb) is a close rendering of facing Greek text but is now dated. Sommerstein (2008) is the much-needed new Loeb translation and also provides annotation. Collard 2008, carefully prepared and highly reliable, includes an excellent translation of *Suppliants* (along with *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes* and *Prometheus*), which is particularly successful in rendering the often demanding lyrical parts of the play; it follows but also engages critically with the most recent critical edition of the play in West 1998², and also provides useful introductory essays and explanatory notes on each play. [Lembke 1975](#) (with introduction by W. Arrowsmith) is readable. [Burian 1991](#) is accurate and reliable. Ewans 1996 offers a vigorous translation (including fragments) and gives ample information

concerning Aeschylus. [Kerr 2001](#) is a free rendering of the original Greek written for the stage.

Performance

For the history of theatre throughout antiquity, see [Bieber 1961](#)². On the stagecraft of Aeschylean plays the seminal work is [Taplin 1977](#). [Hammond 1972](#) is important for the theatrical conditions until the death of Aeschylus. For the circular shape of the *orchêstra*, see [Baldry 1971](#), 41 and more recently [Wiles 1997](#), 44-52; [Revermann 1999](#). On the rectilinear (or trapezoidal) shape, see [Csapo and Slater 1995](#), 79; [Sommerstein 2002](#), 9. See also [Gebhard 1974](#); [Ashby 1988](#); [Davidson 2005](#), 203. For the controversy over the exact relation between the stage and the *orchêstra*, see [Pickard-Cambridge 1946](#), ch. 2, who reviews the evidence of dramas themselves and argues against the theory that there was a separate stage, raised to a moderate or higher level, for the actors (on *logeion* as a later development, see 210-14; cf. [Csapo and Slater 1995](#), 81; [Rehm 1992](#), 34-5; [Wilson 2000](#), 104 and n. 13). For the acting area, cf. [Easterling and Knox 1989](#), ch. 2 (Gould), 12, where the existence of a separate low stage or platform for the actors is not excluded. [Sommerstein 2002](#), 10, leaves the issue open; cf. [Davidson 2005](#), 197. On the tragic actor, see [Baldry 1971](#), 54-62; [Pickard-Cambridge 1988](#)², ch. 3; [Easterling and Knox 1989](#), ch. 2 (Gould), 22-9; [Arnott 1989](#), 44-104; [Ley 1991](#), 25-9. On actors and acting in general, see [Walcot 1976](#), 44-75; [Ghiron-Bistagne 1976](#); [Walton 1984](#), ch. 4; [Pickard-Cambridge 1988](#)², 126-76; [Csapo and Slater 1995](#), 221-85; [Easterling and Hall 2002](#). For acting techniques in general, see [Easterling and Knox 1989](#), ch. 2 (Gould), 27-9. On actors' singing, see [Hall 1999](#). For several aspects of costume in ancient drama, see [Brooke 1962](#); [Baldry 1971](#), 57-60; [Pickard-Cambridge 1988](#)², 177-209; [Easterling and Knox 1989](#), ch. 2 (Gould), 24-7. For a metrical analysis of lyric passages which also aims at interpreting their effect, see [Dale 1968](#)². On verse rhythm, see [West 1983](#). On the lyric and dialogic parts of Greek tragedy, see [Battezzato 2005](#) and [Halleran 2005](#) respectively. On the chorus, see [Lawler 1964](#); [Baldry 1971](#), 62-9; [Pickard-Cambridge 1988](#)², 232-57; [Ley 1991](#), 48-56; [Csapo and Slater 1995](#), 349-68; *Arion* 3 (1995) (special issue on the chorus); [Wiles 1997](#), chs. 4 and 5; [Wiles 2000](#), 128-44. On Aeschylean choruses, with an emphasis on their ritual aspect, see more recently [Gruber 2008](#). On the music of Greek drama, see [Barker 1984/89](#), vol. 1: 62-92; [Pickard-Cambridge 1988](#)², 257-62; [Csapo and Slater 1995](#), 331-48; [Wilson 2002](#) and 2005. On ancient Greek music in general, see [Comotti 1989](#); [Barker 1984/89](#); [West 1992](#); [Anderson 1994](#). For bibliography on reconstructions of ancient music, see [Csapo](#)

and Slater 1995, 422. On the *aulos*, see [Wilson 1999](#), [Landels 1999](#) and [Mathiesen 1999](#), 177-222. On dance in tragedy, see [Kitto 1955](#); [Wiles 1997](#), 87-113. On the ritual significance of dance, see [Lonsdale 1993](#).

Supplication, Marriage, Politics

On supplication, see [Kopperschmidt 1967](#); [Gould 1973](#); [Naiden 2006](#). On the theme of supplication in Greek tragedy, see [Bernek 2004](#); [Stano 2005](#). For supplication in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, see [Gödde 2000](#); [Dreher 2003](#). For the staging of suppliant dramas, see [Rehm 1988](#). On women in antiquity, see esp. [Cameron and Kuhrt 1983](#); [Fantham et al. 1994](#); [Blundell 1995](#). On the status of women in Athenian law and its representation in literature, with special emphasis on the institutions of marriage, family and property, see [Just 1989](#). On the position of women with regard to law in classical Greece, see also [Sealy 1990](#) and [Patterson 1991](#). On marriage in ancient Greece, see [Craik 1984](#); [Leduc 1992](#); [Cox 1998](#). On tragic treatments of marriage, see esp. [Seaford 1987](#); [Rehm 1994](#); [Wohl 1998](#); [Ormand 1999](#); [Foley 2001](#), 59-105. On gender and sexuality in ancient Greece, see in general [Winkler 1990](#); [Keuls 1993](#)²; [Bassi 1999](#). On representations of women in Greek tragedy, see [Loraux 1987](#); [Easterling 1988](#); des [Bouvrie 1990](#). On women in Greek tragedy with regard to Athenian gender ideology, see [Zeitlin 1996](#); [Zelenak 1998](#); [McClure 1999](#); [Foley 2001](#). On the political aspects of Aeschylean dramas, see [Podlecki 1966](#) and [Gagarin 1976](#). On the origins of democracy, see [Musti 1995](#) and [Raaflaub et al. 2007](#). On Athenian democracy see [Ober 1989](#); [Stockton 1990](#). On the Greeks' perception of barbarians and what this implies for the Greeks' own self-definition, see [Harrison 2002](#). On the representation of barbarians in Greek tragedy, see [Bacon 1961](#), who collects all relevant material, and esp. [Hall 1989](#), who offers a historical and ideological perspective on the Greek construction of barbarian identity. For Greek perceptions of Egypt in antiquity, see [Froidefond 1971](#) and [Vasunia 2001](#).

Reception

[Garland 2004](#) is a fascinating book, which traces the line of descent of Greek tragedies from the fifth century to the present day, examining the different groups of people responsible for the transmission, including actors, philologists, translators, directors and so on. It is extremely readable and laudably concise considering the breadth of material it covers, and offers useful appendices with manuscripts,

translations and productions. Sheppard 1927 is a study of the influence of Aeschylus (and Sophocles) from antiquity to the end of the nineteenth century. [Mund-Dopchie 2001](#) gives a well-documented account of the editorial work on Aeschylus in the Renaissance. [Zimmermann 2001](#) is a two-fold survey of the reception of Aeschylus in antiquity focusing on Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and in the German literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The most comprehensive study of ancient Greek, Latin and Etruscan iconography is *LIMC*. Standard works of reference for the artistic representation of tragedies are Séchan 1926; [Trendall and Webster 1971](#); [Shapiro 1994](#); [Green and Handley 1995](#). Taplin 2007 is the most recent book on the intersection between Greek tragedies and vase-paintings of the fourth century BC. On the pictorial record of Aeschylean tragedies, see [Kossatz-Deissmann 1978](#) (45-62 on the Danaid trilogy), who is more sceptical about the relation between illustrations and dramas. [Keuls 1974](#) includes detailed analysis of the 'water-carrying' theme, which came to be associated particularly with the Danaids, in late Greek and Roman literature and art as well as on South Italian vase-paintings of the fourth century BC. Stano 2005 includes a survey and discussion of vase-paintings relating to the Aeschylean trilogy. On the reception of the Danaid-myth in the Arts from the fourteenth to the end of the twentieth century, see Davidson Reid 1993, vol. 1 s.v. 'Danaïds'. On the performances of ancient Greek plays on modern stage, see Walton 1987; [Flashar 1991](#); [Hartigan 1995](#); [Mavromoustakos 1999](#); [McDonald 2003](#); [Hall and Macintosh 2005](#). For modern productions of Aeschylus see also [Melchinger 1974](#). Electronic databases of performances are available at (a) The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford and (b) The reception of the texts and images of ancient Greece in late twentieth-century drama and poetry in English (the Open University, UK). For Greek tragedy in film, see [MacKinnon 1986](#). For classical themes in opera, see [McDonald 2001](#).

Bibliography

Abbreviations

- EGF = M. Davies (1988), *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- FGrH = F. Jacoby (1923-58), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden: Brill.
- IEG = M.L. West (1992²), *Iambi et elegi graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LIMC = *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (9 vols in 18 parts, 1981-1999). Zurich: Artemis Verlag.
- M-W = R. Merkelbach and M.L. West (1968), *Fragmenta Hesiodica*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- OCD³ = *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (1996). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- P. Oxy. = *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*.
- PCG = R. Kassel and C. Austin (1983-98), *Poetae Comici Graeci*. Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter.
- PMGF = M. Davies (1991), *Poetarum melicorum Graecorum fragmenta*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- TrGF = *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vols 1-5. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Vol. 1 B. Snell (1971; rev. R. Kannicht 1986²): *Didascaliae tragicae, catalogi tragicorum et tragoediarum, testimonia et fragmenta tragicorum minorum*; vol. 2 R. Kannicht and B. Snell (1981), *Fragmenta adespota*; vol. 3 S. Radt (1985), *Aeschylus*; vol. 4 S. Radt (1977, 1999²), *Sophocles*; vol. 5.1 R. Kannicht (2004), *Euripides*.

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- W. Allan (2005), 'Tragedy and Early Greek Philosophical Tradition', in Gregory (ed.), 71-82.
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Glossary

anapaest: a metrical unit consisting of two short syllables followed by a long one [U U –].

aulos: a double-reeded pipe (often misnamed ‘flute’), used as musical accompaniment to dithyrambs, the sung parts of Greek tragedies and in various other activities, including sacrifices.

clementia: clemency and mercy, a celebrated virtue and a Roman goddess.

didascalialia: an official record of dramatic performances.

dochmiac: a type of lyric metre with an urgent or emotional tone (expressing excitement, joy or grief) [U – – U –].

epiklêros: the daughter of a man who had no male heir.

epirrhematic composition: the alternation between choral song and an actor’s spoken verses.

episode: a scene after the prologue, involving the actors (or also the chorus).

exodos: the exit scene of a tragedy, the part following the last episode and choral ode.

Hikesios: patron of supplication, cult title of Zeus.

hydria: a common type of water-jar with three handles (one vertical and two horizontal ones), also used by ancient Greeks as a multi-purpose container.

iambic trimeter: the most common metre in the spoken verses of Greek tragedies, close to natural speech [x – U – / x – U – / x – U –].

ionic: a metrical unit associated with an exotic flavour. It consisted of four syllables, either two long followed by two short (ionic *a majore*, ‘greater ionic’) or two short followed by two long (ionic *a minore*, ‘lesser ionic’).

kratêr: a large bowl, used for mixing wine and water.

lecythion: a lyric trochaic metre [– U – x – U –].

loutrophoros: a pottery vessel used for holding water during wedding and funeral rituals.

metoikos: ‘metic’: a resident alien, a foreigner with no citizen rights, who was granted permission to live in Athens.

orchêstra: literally, ‘dancing place’, a level space at the centre of the performance area, between the stage and the spectators, where the chorus sang and danced. It was sometimes occupied by the actors too.

parodos: literally, ‘passageway’ (also called *eisodos*, ‘way in’), the

corridor leading into the *orchêstra* and also the first song of the chorus.

phialê: a bowl for wine, used by ancient Greeks for libations in religious rites or as a drinking cup at the symposium.

philos: kin, friend.

pithos: a large pottery jar, used by ancient Greeks for storing food or liquid.

polis: city-state.

prostatês: a patron of resident aliens (metics) and the mediator between them and the civic institutions.

proxenos: a man officially appointed to take care of another state's interests in the city where he lived.

scholium: a note written on the margins of a papyrus or a medieval manuscript.

skênê: literally, 'tent', a building between the *orchêstra* and the stage, decorated according to the needs of the play in order to represent the drama's 'scene' (a palace, a temple or other place).

stasimon: 'standing song', choral ode sung by the chorus after they have taken their places in the *orchêstra*, in between episodes and before the *exodos*.

strophe/antistrophe (*strophê/antistrophê*): lyric passages which correspond to each other exactly in metre and style.

Suda: A massive historical and literary encyclopaedic lexicon of the ancient world, dating from the tenth century AD.

Xenios: patron of hospitality, cult title of Zeus.

Chronology

For recent times this list draws on Davidson Reid 1993 and The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford.

BC

- 7th cent-6th cent.: Anonymous epic *Danaïs* (alternative title *Danaïds*)
- c. 525: Birth of Aeschylus at Eleusis
- 510: Athenians put an end to the Peisistratid tyranny (date unknown, regarded as earlier than Aeschylus' *Suppliants*): Phrynichus' *Egyptians* and *Danaïds*
- 508/7: Cleisthenes' democratic reforms
- c. 499: Aeschylus' first production
- 484: Aeschylus' first victory
- 474: Pindar's *Pythian* 9
- 472: Aeschylus' *Persians* (on Salamis. Earliest surviving tragedy). First prize
- 467: Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. First prize probably 463: Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (defeated Sophocles). First prize
- 462/1: Democracy radicalized in Athens by Ephialtes
- 461: Alliance between Athens and Argos. Cimon ostracized
- 458: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy (*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, *Eumenides*). First prize
- 456/5: Death of Aeschylus
- 451/50: Pericles' citizenship law
- c. 450: Cratinus' career begins mid-5th cent.: Melanippides' *Danaïds* (dithyramb)
- c. 430-428: Euripides' *Children of Heracles*
- c. 424-420: Euripides' *Suppliant Women*
- 405: Aristophanes' *Frogs* dramatizes a contest between Aeschylus and Euripides with Dionysus as judge
- c. 380-340: Theodectas
- c. 360: Birth of Diphilus
- c. 345: Death of Nicochares
- 330s: Reconstruction of Athenian theatre in stone by Lycurgus. Official records of Greek drama-texts established
- c. 195-180: Editions of Greek plays by Aristophanes of Byzantium mid 2nd-mid 1st cent.: Ezekiel's *Exagogê* (Exodus)
- c. 1st cent.: pseudo-Platonic Axiochus

- c. 99-55: Lucretius
- 70-19: Vergil
- 65-08: Horace
- c. 63 BC-AD 10: Didymus
- c. 54-19: Tibullus
- c. 50-15: Propertius
- 43 BC-AD 17: Ovid
- 23: publication of Horace's *Odes* (first three books)

AD

- 1st cent.: Hyginus' *Tales*
- 2nd cent.-early 3rd cent.: Apollodorus' *Library*
- 10th cent.: Suda
- c. 950: Mediceus Laurentianus 32.9
- 1518: *editio princeps* of Aeschylus
- 1552: editions of Aeschylus by A. Turnebus and A. Robortellus
- 1555: Latin translation of Aeschylus by J. Sanravius
- 1644: Performance of *Les Danaïdes*, by Jean Ogier de Gombauld.
Tragedy. Paris
- 1678: Performance of *Lyncée*, by Gaspard Abeille. Tragedy. Paris
- 1703: Composition of *Hypermestra, or, Love in Tears*, by Robert Owen.
Tragedy. London. Unperformed
- 1704: Performance of *Hypermnestre*, by Théodore de Riupeirous.
Tragedy. Paris
- 1734: Composition of *La Bonne Femme*, by Pierre François Biancolelli
and Jean Antoine Romagnesi. Parody
- 1758: First performance of *Hypermnestre* by Antoine-Marin Lemierre.
Tragedy
- 1764: First performance of *Ipermestra*. Ballet. Choreography by Jean-
Georges Noverre
- 1767: Composition of *L'Ipermestra* by Gerolamo Pompei. Tragedy
- 1792-4: Four drawings illustrating Aeschylus' *Suppliants* made by John
Flaxman
- 1797: *Die Danaiden*. Poem by Johann Diederich Gries
- 1818: A. Kalvos' *Le Danaïdi*. Tragedy
- 1821: Th.J. Dibdin, *The Daughters of Danaus and the Sons of Aegyptus*,
or, *Fifty Weddings and Nine and Forty Murders*. Burlesque
- 1834: First performance of *Le Piccole Danaïdi*. Ballet. Choreography by
Antonio Cortesi
- 1845: First performance of *Les Danaïdes*. Ballet. Choreography by
Michael-François Hoguet
- 1869: First performance of *Hypermnestra, or, The Girl of the Period*, by

- Frank Sikes. Comedy
- 1885: 'The Danaïd'. Sculpture by Auguste Rodin (in numerous versions)
- 1894: *The Daughters of Danaus* by Mona Caird. Novel
- 1897: *Le Danaïdi*. Dramatic poem by Arturo Graf
- 1903: *The Suppliants*. Dance-drama by Isadora Duncan in Greece (Royal Theatre). Duncan's tour of Central Europe after 1903 and before 1915
- 1906: 'The Danaïds'. Painting by John William Waterhouse
- 1920: *Les Suppliantes*. Collection of Poems by Pierre Benoit
- 1930: *Daimonassa*. Drama including the Danaïd-myth by T. Sturge Moore
- 1930: *Hiketides*. Ancient Theatre of Delphi, Greece. The Company of the Delphic Celebrations. Translation by Ioannis Gryparis. Directed by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos
- 1933: *The Suppliants*. Cambridge. The Cambridge Festival Theatre of Terence Gray. Translated by Terence Gray. Directed by Joseph Gordon Macleod
- 1936: *Suppliants*. Original language. Randolph-Macon Women's College in Lynchburg, Virginia, USA. The College Department of Greek. Directed by Mabel K. Whiteside
- 1941: *Suppliants*. Paris, France. Directed by Jean Louis Barrault
- 1955: *Der Mütter Bittgang*. Translation of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* by U. von Wilamowitz. Directed by Heinz Dieter Kenter
- 1955: Extracts from Greek Drama (Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Sophocles' *Ajax*) in modern Greek. Athens and Egypt. The Spyros Mousouris Popular Theatre
- 1960: *Suppliant Maidens*. Recitation. New York. The Living Theatre Company, USA
- 1961: *Hiketides*. Production for the Greek State Radio. Reproduced in CD-form in 2006
- 1963: M. Lymberaki, *Les Danaïdes*. Drama, performed in Paris (Théâtre des Amandiers, centre dramatique de Nanterre), 1973
- 1964: *Hiketides*. Epidauros. The National Theatre of Greece. Directed by Alexis Minotis
- 1968: *Suppliants*. University of Tokyo, Japan. The University of Tokyo Greek Tragedy Study Club. Directed by Yusuke Kaniyama
- 1968: *Danaidy*. Adaptation in Polish of Aeschylus' *Suppliants* along with *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides* and *Seven against Thebes*. Olsztyn, Poland. Directed by Bohdan Gluszczyk
- 1977-8: *Hiketides*. Epidauros. The National Theatre of Greece. Directed by Spyros Evangelatos

- 1978 (revived in 1983): *Hiketides*. The State Theatre of Northern Greece. Ancient Theatre of Philippi and Epidauros. Directed by George Michailidis
- 1982: *Le Supplici*. Ancient theatre of Syracuse, Italy. Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico, Italy. Directed by Otomar Krejča
- 1990-9: *Suppliants*. Royal Holloway University, London. The Royal Holloway University, Department of Drama and Theatre. Directed by Poh Sim Plowright and David Wiles
- 1991: *Hiketiden*. Darmstadt, Germany. Directed by Lore Stefanek
- 1994: *Hiketides*. The *Desmoi* Cultural and Artistic Association. Directed by Stavros Doufexis
- 1995-7: *Les Danaïdes*. Adaptation in French. Romania and tour in other European countries and USA. The National Theatre of Craiova, Romania. Adapted and directed by Silviu Purcarete
- 1996: *Filles de Vache, Fils de Taureau*. Adaptation in French. Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence, France. L'Atelier de Création Théâtrale. Adapted and directed by Nanouk Broche
- 1996: *Les Suppliantes*. Brussels, Belgium. Praxis
- 1998: *Suppliants*. Adaptation. London. The Gate Theatre, Notting Hill, London. Adapted and directed by James Kerr
- 1999: *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium*. Adaptation by Charles L. Mee. University of California, San Diego, California USA. The Department of Theatre and Dance. Directed by Les Waters
- 2000: *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium*. Adaptation by Charles L. Mee. Louisville, Kentucky, USA. Directed by Les Waters
- 2001: *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium*. Adaptation by Charles L. Mee. Seattle, Washington, USA. Directed by Brian Kulick
- 2001: *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium*. Adaptation by Charles L. Mee. New Haven, Berkeley, Chicago and New York, USA. The Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Directed by Les Waters
- 2002: *Big Love, or, The Wedding of the Millennium*. Adaptation by Charles L. Mee. Washington, DC, USA. The Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, USA. Directed by Howard Shalwitz
- 2005: *The Suppliants*. Adaptation by James Kerr. London, UK. Directed by Sam Leifer
- 2006: *Errances*. Paris, France. Adaptation. Directed and performed by Dido Lykoudis

Appendix: Operas

This list is based on Davidson Reid 1993, s.v. 'Danaïds' and McDonald 2001. Dates refer to premieres and names to composers.

- 1658: *Hipermestra*. Francesco Cavalli.
- 1716: *Hypermnèstre*. Charles-Hubert Gervais.
- 1724: *Ipermestra*. Geminiano Giacomelli.
- 1727: *Ipermestra*. Antonio Vivaldi.
- 1728: *Ipermestra*. Francesco Feo.
- 1736: *Ipermestra*. Giovanni Battista Ferrandini.
- 1741: *Ipermestra*. Rinaldo da Capua.
- 1744: *Ipermestra*. Johann Adolf Hasse.
- 1744: *Ipermestra*. Christoff Willibald Gluck.
- 1748: *Ipermestra*. Egidio Duni.
- 1748: *Ipermestra*. Ferdinando Bertoni.
- 1749: *Ipermestra*. Anonymous composer.
- 1751: *Ipermestra*. Niccolò Jommelli.
- 1751: *Ipermestra*. Pasquale Cafaro.
- 1752: *Ipermestra*. Andrea Adolfati.
- 1754: *L'Ipermestra*. David Perez.
- 1758: *Ipermestra*. Baldassare Galuppi.
- 1759: *Ipermestra*. Ignazio Fiorillo.
- 1761: *Ipermestra*. Pasquale Cafaro.
- 1766: *Ipermestra*. Giuseppe Sarti.
- 1768: *Ipermestra*. Gian Francesco de Majo.
- 1769: *L'Ipermestra*. Josef Mysliveček.
- 1772: *Ipermestra*. Niccolò Piccinni.
- 1773: *Ipermestra*. Gian Francesco Fortunati.
- 1774: *Ipermestra*. Johann Gottlieb Naumann.
- 1780: *Ipermestra*. Vicente Martín y Soler.
- 1781: *Ipermestra*. Giuseppe Millico.
- 1784: *Les Danaïdes*. Antonio Salieri.
- 1785: *Ipermestra*. Salvatore Rispoli.
- 1789: *Ipermestra*. Gennaro Astarita.
- 1791: *Ipermestra*. Giovanni Paisiello.
- 1792: *Le Danaïdi*. Gaetano Isola.
- 1794: *Le Danaïdi*. Angelo Tarchi.
- 1810: *Le Danaïdi*. Francesco Morlacchi.

- 1816: *Le Danaidi Romane*. Stefano Pavesi.
1819: *Le Danaide*. Simon Mayr.
1825: *Ipermestra*. Saverio Mercadante.
1827: *Danao re d'Argo*. Giuseppe Persiani.
1838: *Ipermestra*. Baltasar Saldoni.
1843: *Ipermestra*. Ramon Carnicer y Battle.

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